



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

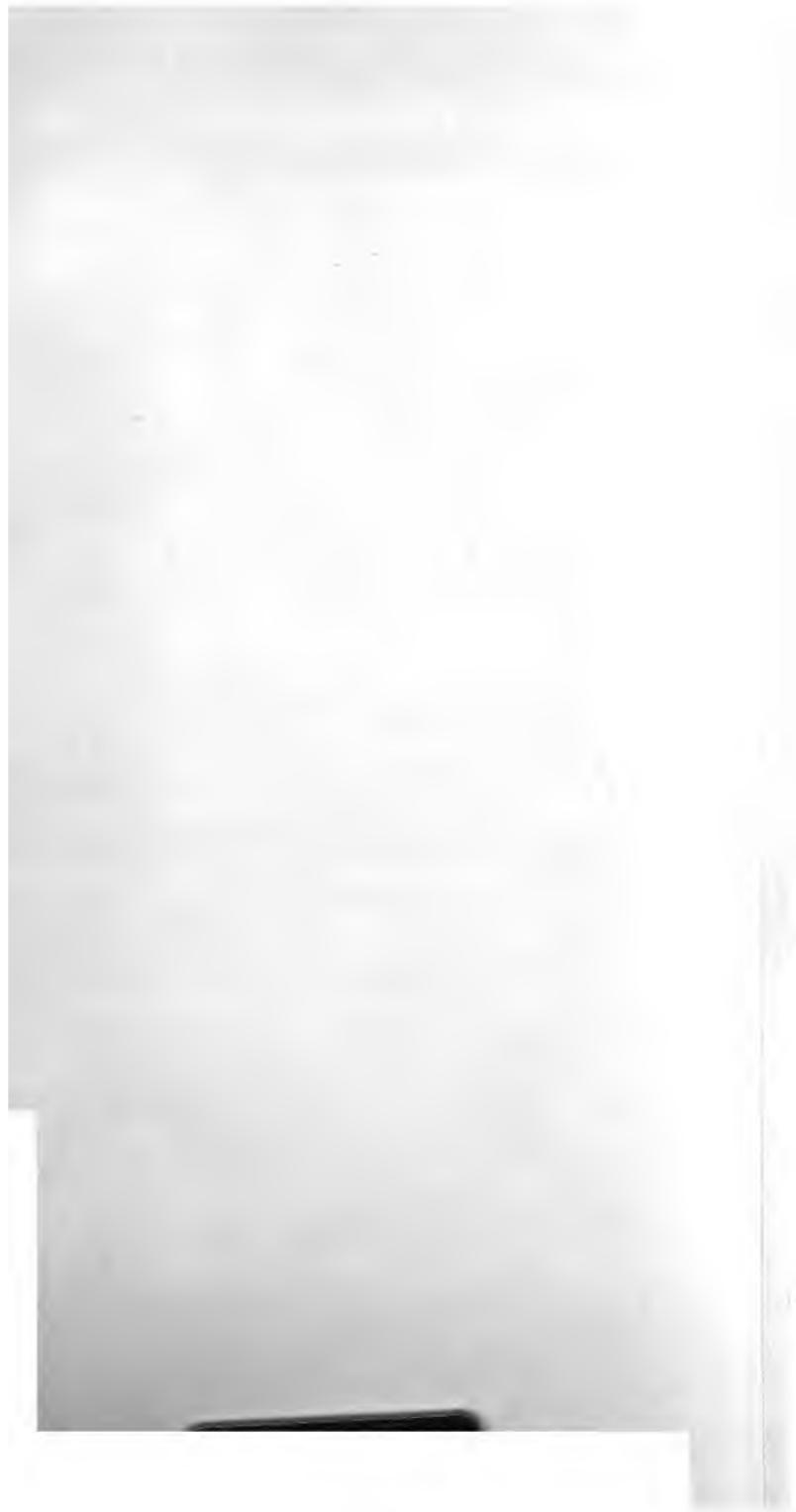
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3433 06822985 9



ZET
(BAMPTON,
1789

SHEPHERD



ZET
(BAMPTON,
1788

SHEPHERD

THE
GROUND AND CREDIBILITY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION:

IN
A COURSE OF
SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT THE
LECTURE

FOUNDED BY THE REV. JOHN BAMPON, M.A. LATE CANON
OF SALISBURY.

BY THE
REV. RICHARD SHEPHERD, D.D. F.R.S.
ARCHDEACON OF BEDFORD,
AND CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

London:

PRINTED FOR LOCKYER DAVIS, IN HOLBORN; AND
DANIEL PRINCE, OXFORD.

M,DCC,LXXXVIII.

18425.



*Extract from the last Will and Testament of the late Rev,
JOHN BAMPTON, Canon of Salisbury.*

— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates
“ to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the
“ University of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold
“ all and singular the said Lands or Estates upon
“ trust, and to the intents and purposes hereafter
“ mentioned; that is to say, I will and appoint, that
“ the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford
“ for the time being shall take and receive all the
“ rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after all
“ taxes, reparations, and necessary deductions made)
“ that he pay all the remainder to the endowment of
“ eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be established
“ for ever in the said University, and to be perform-
“ ed in the manner following.

“ I direct and appoint, that upon the first Tuesday
“ in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by
“ the Heads of Colleges only, and by no others, in
“ the room adjoining to the Printing-House, between
“ the hours of ten in the morning and two in the after-
“ noon, to preach eight Divinity Lecture Sermons,
“ the year following, at St. Mary’s in Oxford, be-
“ tween the commencement of the last month in Lent
“ Term, and the end of the third week in A&T
“ Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divi-
“ nity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either
“ of the following subjects—to confirm and establish
“ the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and
“ schismatics—upon the divine authority of the Holy
“ Scriptures—upon the authority of the writings of the

“ primitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of
“ the primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our
“ Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity
“ of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the Chris-
“ tian Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles’ and
“ Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct that thirty copies of the eight Di-
“ vinity Lecture Sermons shall be always printed,
“ within two months after they are preached, and
“ one copy shall be given to the Chancellor of the
“ University, and one copy to the head of every Col-
“ lege, and one copy to the Mayor of the city of
“ Oxford, and one copy to be put into the Bodleian
“ Library; and the expence of printing them shall
“ be paid out of the Lands or Estates given for es-
“ tablishing the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the
“ Preacher shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the
“ revenue, before they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall
“ be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
“ mons, unless he hath taken the Degree of Master
“ of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities of
“ of Oxford or Cambridge; and the same person
“ shall never preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons
“ twice.”

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND
THOMAS THURLOW, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

MY LORD,

THE appointment, which produced the following Discourses, will in some degree sanction my ambition to present them to the public under the protection of your Lordship's Name. It originated with the University of Oxford: and interested as your Lordship is in whatever may

claim the least relation to a place, where you passed many of your early years with a Propriety of Conduct, that hath marked your Character through life, you will I am sure accept with Condescension the efforts thus excited, to elucidate the Truth and Purity of that Religion, of which you have ever discovered yourself in Heart and Practice a warm and consistent Friend.

I am well aware, that I have ventured on ground already taken ; and that many valuable Treatises have appeared on the subject of the following sheets. But there is a mode of writing peculiar to different periods :

riods : and the Folios of the last age are ill relished by the desultory readers of this. Hence it is, that some of those publications alluded to have fallen into disesteem ; as being too diffuse, and appearing tedious : digressing into extraneous matter on some points not very material, and treating with a degree of languor others of more importance. Those on the other hand, which are comprised in the narrow limits of one or two Sermons, I conceive to be in substance too compressed, to afford general satisfaction ; the Brevity requiring too many assumptions, to obviate the doubts of Sceptical enquirers. Others again, though recommending, and enforcing founded

Truths with Elegance and Perpicuity, seem rather calculated to impress the mind already persuaded ; than to obviate the Exceptions of Cavil, and satisfy Scruple and Doubt.

These observations have long induced me to think something further wanting : something on the subject in form and matter clear, yet close and argumentative ; such as adverting to Objections as they rose, and thus clearing the way to Truth, might command assent on the assured Ground of Conviction. Pursuant of such design, I have, in the subsequent investigation, taken nothing for granted : proceeding gradually from proof to proof, and shun-

shunning, as I proceeded, the discussion of no disputable article that lay in the way of my plan.

In those metaphysical disquisitions, to which my subject occasionally led me, I have particularly aimed at Perspicuity: sensible, that whenever a writer involves his ideas in Obscurity, it will always remain a doubt whether he be satisfactory to himself, and is an absolute bar to the conviction of others. On subjects of that nature, it is not easy to write to the comprehension of every reader; but, as far as I was able, I have attempted to do it.

And as new Adversaries of a Religion, the Tenets of which are of a nature to excite none, but such as are Adversaries to human Happiness, are continually aiming at new Objections, or vamping old ones up in new stile and figure ; I have, on every article, more particularly applied myself to the Exceptions of modern writers. Every futile objection, in the short form prescribed on the present occasion, it was not possible to notice : of those that have been proposed to the public with most Plausibility, and retailed with the greatest Success, I have not designedly passed by any ; for indeed I have observed none, that in the fair field of argument might not safely be met.

The

The plan I proposed to pursue, and which in the early Process of the Lectures I communicated to your Lordship, you were pleased to regard in a favourable light: I have now to wish the Execution may merit your equal approbation. But this in whatever degree your judgment may with-hold, I am easy in the persuasion, that your Lordship's known Zeal for the Interests of our common Religion will with Candour regard a well-intentioned endeavour: a zeal, my Lord, which you have displayed in every situation of life; particularly in that exalted one, which afforded you the more ample scope for exertion: not terminating there in cold and languid Wishes, but

expressed in a cordial Attention to indigent and deserving Ministers in your Diocese; who have often found themselves promoted without Application on their Part, and often against the Application of Greatness and Power.

There is Merit in supporting an inferior Station with Firmness and Resignation: but much greater, as it is a much more difficult part to sustain, in filling an exalted one with Propriety and Attention; in which the Claims of Duty are more numerous, and the Charge of greater Weight. Our Minds indeed are formed with different Aptitudes: and some there are, that only feel themselves in elevated Situations; where there is Scope for Exertion, and

Room

Room to expand. But it is your Lordship's peculiar Felicity, to appear formed, or more properly to form yourself, for every Situation in life, to which you have been occasionally called; from the literary ease of academic privacy, to the highest honours of your profession: to have in every situation, through which you passed, conciliated Esteem, and left it with the general Regret of those, with whom you have been respectively connected.

Those Inducements alone would have directed my pen to the Request already made, if more powerful ones were wanting: the Pleasure of acknowledging the Favours, I have from your Lordship myself received; and the Satisfaction

satisfaction of testifying to the world,
how much, and how truly, I have the
Honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's dutiful,

Most obliged,

And devoted servant,

R. S H E P H E R D.



ADVERTISEMENT.

REFERENCE having been made in the Course of the following Discourses to a Paradiacal State, the Author has annexed to them a Latin Sermon on the Subject; though written on a different Occasion, and preached several Years ago.

K XVII

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

Introductory Discourse, distinguishing the Excellency of Christianity from that variable Rule of Duty, in the Pretensions of moral Fitness held out by the Deist; and the Christianity of the Gospel, from that Species of it adopted by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, and by Socinus and his Followers revived.

Prov. iii. 13, &c.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: &c.

SERMON II.

The Existence of God demonstrated: His Omnipotence, in the Supersedure of Nature, vindicated: His Immateriality asserted.

A 2

Rom.

ADVERTISEMENT.

REFERENCE having been made in the Course of the following Discourses to a Paradisiacal State, the Author has annexed to them a Latin Sermon on the Subject; though written on a different Occasion, and preached several Years ago.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

Introductory Discourse, distinguishing the Excellency of Christianity from that variable Rule of Duty, in the Pretensions of moral Fitness held out by the Deist; and the Christianity of the Gospel, from that Species of it adopted by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, and by Socinus and his Followers revived.

Prov. iii. 13, &c.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: &c.

SERMON II.

The Existence of God demonstrated: His Omnipotence, in the Supersedure of Nature, vindicated: His Immateriality asserted.

A 2

Rom.

C O N T E N T S.

M A T T . xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

S E R M O N V I I I .

An Enquiry into the general Scope and Tenor
of the Scriptures of the New Testament,
respecting the Nature and Character of
Christ.

M A T T . xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

C O N C I O L A T I N A .

De Statu Paradisiaco.

E C C L S . vii. 30.

*Hoc tantum inveni; quod Deus homines perfectos
creavit, ipsi autem ratiocinia plurima invenerunt.*

THE
Ground and Credibility
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

SERMON I.

PROV. iii. 13, &c.

*Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom,
and the man that getteth understanding:
for the merchandise of it is better than
the merchandise of silver, and the gain
thereof than fine gold. She is more pre-
cious than rubies, and all the things thou
canst desire, are not to be compared with
her. Length of days is in her right hand,
and in her left hand riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and
all her paths are peace. She is a tree of
life to them, that lay hold on her.*

THE original word חכמָה, in this SERMON
place rendered, wisdom, is, in the first
chapter of this book of Proverbs, used in
A the

I.

Seneca the plused number : which, according to
the Hebrew idiom, is sometimes substituted
for a superlative degree. *Wise*
wisdom ; or, literally translated,
wisdom : the word *רָאַתִּים* there denoting the highest and most excellent
wisdom ; the wisdom of religion : which
is indeed so far the highest point of
wisdom ; that, though its roots be fixed
on earth, its branches reach to heaven :
it hath the promise both of this world,
and that which is to come. 'Tis the
same kind of wisdom, that is described
in my text ; and in this sense the word
is frequently used, both in this book of
Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The descrip-
tion is highly luxuriant ; and were it as
true, as it is rich and elegant, one might
conceive it of such efficacy to captivate
mankind ; that no attention would be
withheld, no exertions spared, to conci-
liate an ample plenary possession of her :
at least that no wishes would prevail,
no endeavours be exerted, to banish such
a religion from the earth.

But

J Q V M

But with what religion will this engaging imagery comport ? Not with the religion of nature ; for in different ages, and different countries, the religion of nature hath deviated into the grossest errors. It taught the Persian, to pay his adoration to the sun ; and some parts of India, to worship the tremendous power of darkness and evil. It directed the Egyptian, to fall down and humble himself to the reptile, and the plant ; and impelled mankind to superstitions, often as immoral, as the rites themselves were ridiculous and vain. Whether the Theology of Greece and Rome were founded in political artifice, or in the flights of poetical imagination, the description before us can not apply to that religion : for it boasted not a single character of wisdom, purity, or satisfaction. Nor doth it aptly suit the imperfect, incomplete religion of the Jews. Burthened with a yoke of ceremonies, which, says the apostle, *neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear* ; by a rigid observance

SERMON of those ceremonies, exposed to innumerable and great hardships, and denied a variety of gratifications, did they tread the way of pleasantness : or cut off from the rest of the world, hating their neighbours, and in their turn despised and ridiculed by them, knew they the path of peace ? The tree of life they had forfeited, and it had been removed far from them ; nor did the institutions of their religion, nor even its promises, as understood by them, extend so far, as to enable them to lay hold on it.

The divine Encomiast looked farther, and higher. Rapt into future ages, he exhibits the picture of a perfect religion : and if we examine the traits of it, we shall find the animated description suit only the religion of Jesus Christ ; and suit it in every particular. What is *the merchandise of silver and gold, and precious stones*, with all that is desirable in life ; when set in competition with *the gain*, which that religion proposes,

the

the acquisition of the Kingdom of Heaven? In enjoining temperance, the fountain of health, and parent of longevity, she holds out *length of days in her right hand*: and the general prohibition of sensual and worldly pleasures, *the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life*, which Christianity pronounces, will, if complied with, in its natural consequences, and according to the ordinary dispensations of Providence, conduct us to, what *her left hand offers, riches and honour*. So *easy is her yoke, and light her burden*; that her ways may be justly styled *ways of pleasantness, and her paths the path-way of peace*. Through a Redeemer's sufferings, we are re-instated in the possession of *the tree of life*: and it is in every Christian's power, to reach out his hand, and *lay hold on it*.

If nature incline men to wish for happiness, and with the rules of such a religion as this, a religion so happily calculated to promote it, they cannot be

SERMON I. brought universally to comply ; we have to lament the intemperance of youth, the worldly-mindedness of age, and perhaps above all to deplore the known depravity of human nature, which can best account for so inconsistent a conduct. But that numbers should be found, uninfluenced, as it may seem, by any incentive, except the fiend-like motive of counteracting the happiness of the human race, anxious to extirpate such a religion from the world ; now combating it with the force of arguments, such as subtlety supplies, now employing the light weapons of irony and ridicule against it ; haranguing discipular circles in every place of public resort, retailing infipid objections, which have been a hundred times refuted, compassing sea and land to make proselytes to their opinions : this, did not experience incontestibly prove the fact, would transcend our belief ; as it almost baffles reason to account for such exertions.

Some

Some motives however may be assigned, tending to excite those malevolent attacks: the affectation of singularity, the love of novelty, the repugnance to whatever checks the tide of present pleasures, the pride of seeming wise; the conscious meanness of acknowledging the charms of virtue, and at the same time stooping to the practise of vice, and, from thence derived, the audacity of justifying that practice by destroying or confounding all principles of religious truth. These, acting on different minds, may influence correspondent habits of thinking; and produce and explain the illiberal insults which religion sometimes sustains: while reason shudders at the desperate stake the rash adventurer risks in an unequal contest; where he can gain nothing, and may lose every thing.

But amidst the various engines, that have been set at work, to prejudice the interests of Christianity, none are more

A 4 mischievous

SERMON mischievous than those; which have I. substituted some shew of religion in its room. For attacks upon a religion so pure in its precepts, so calculated to improve the mind in virtue, and raise it above mean, and selfish, and narrow pursuits, without the pretended introduction of some other religion in its place, can have no better effects with sober and serious men; than to convince them of secret designs, framed against virtue's self, and tending to set mankind loose from all restraints of conscience, and the shackles of moral duty.

Against such efforts the world is guarded: and treat them as desperate attempts to dissolve the bonds of society, and introduce barbarism, anarchy, and confusion. And that this must be the consequence of principles of Atheism, or of that kind of Theism, as detrimental to the morals of mankind as Atheism itself, which supposes God to have no regard of human actions, is a truth.

truth generally assented to, and well SERMON
understood.

I.

Of those adversaries of Christianity, who advance with schemes of religion in their hands, I will mention only two. The one is he, who disclaims all revelation ; and bows down to the fantastic idol of moral fitness : an universal rule of action, as he represents it ; and in all instances a sufficient one, as he affects to believe it. Under the other character are understood those, who beneath the mask of Christianity employ their secret efforts against it : who insidiously assume its name, and scarcely that ;* who, while they say, Lord ! Lord ! are sedulously undermining that Lord's authority, dignity, and power. That advances against it, with the air and port of an open and avowed enemy : this enlists under its banner, only to

* In common with the Mahometans and Jews, the Socinians affect the appellation of UNITARIANS.

deceive ;

SERMON deceive ; thus employing against it the
L. double powers of hostility and fraud :
that bids bold defiance ; this, like the
false disciple, betrays with a kiss. We
will examine the general features of
each : their particular pretensions will,
in the course of the subsequent lectures,
be with more minuteness investigated.

By those underminers of the Christian Faith, it will be obvious to my audience, that I have in my eye the spawn of the antient Ebionites, the revived sect of the Socinians ; whose principal aim is not the denial of the Trinity, nor of the Divinity, nor Pre-existence of Christ, nor of any other single article of Christianity : those may be steps ; but their masked design is an object of larger extent. Some dislike one gospel, and some another ; and of those, which they admit, they hold themselves at liberty to believe just as much as they please. They were first stiled Cerinthians, Ebionites, and Nazarenes : for those several sects, though

though differing in appellation, sprung up ^{SERMON}
much about the same time, and in their ^{I.}
fundamental doctrines were nearly the
same. They acknowledged Jesus to have
been the Messiah ; but acknowledged
him, with that defective apprehension of
his nature and dignity, characterised by
our Lord himself ; *seeing they saw, but did*
not perceive ; and hearing, they heard, but
did not understand. The uniform tenor
of the gospel evinces a requisition of
faith greater than the bare acknowledg-
ment, that Jesus was the Messiah : his
true disciples were further required to
believe him to be the Son of God. Thus
when our Lord asked them, whom they
conceived him to be ; Peter answered, *thou*
art Christ, the Son of the living God. And at
his trial the high priest in solemn terms
adjured him to tell them, *whether he were*
Christ, the Son of God. Hence we learn
what was the true faith ; and how far
that of the Ebionites was defective.
They admitted him to be the Messiah,
but rejected the evangelical account of
his

SERMON his Divinity : they pretended to believe
I. him to have risen from the dead, but
allowed him no more than human
powers.

Those were the the tenets, on which modern Socinianism has been built : from its origin to the present day, a very contracted sect ; and in the long succession of seventeen hundred years continually dying away, and reviving. Paul of Samosate, bishop and patriarch of Antioch, was their great luminary : with all the influence of his station, he propagated his doctrines ; in which, finding himself resolutely opposed, he with all the meanness of a temporalist abjured them. The storm a little over, the restless spirit of innovation induced in him a second attempt to revive them : when the neighbouring bishops assembled themselves at Antioch ; and, after a fair and candid discussion, unanimously condemned them : condemned those particular tenets, the denial of Christ's Divinity, and of his

his descent from Heaven. And the opinion, the whole Christian Church in that early age entertained of those tenets, forms a powerful argument against them.

But I intend not in this discourse a History of Socinianism ; and therefore pass over Theodosius, Symmachus, Artemon, and others ; even the great Socinus himself, a man of shrewd parts, but who wanted much the ballast of learning : only remarking, that the doctrines, to which those Heresiarchs objected, themselves plainly saw were founded on the express word of scripture ; and therefore the scriptures, so asserting them, some rejected, and others endeavoured to explain away. But it is not the rejection of this, or that scripture doctrine, which will satisfy our modern Socinians : with affected regard for Christ, their brother, their teacher, and friend, they disown him as their Lord ; and of his supremacy and original reject his own account :

SERMON account: with pretended zeal for Christianity, their incessant labours are directed to undermine the authority of those scriptures, on which Christianity is founded.

Compared with modern Socinians, the more decent Mr. Toland pursues the same point with modesty and moderation. All that he contends for is, the right of *interpreting scripture figuratively, when occasion requires it.** We see, to what this will lead: for, every one judging for himself of the necessity of such figurative interpretation, both doctrines and precepts will be easily interpreted away. Toland however keeps up a shew of reverence for the authority of the scriptures. But what say our modern Socinians? Why truly, that the “*prodigious divine apparatus* of a particular “inspiration of each sacred writer [of “the Gospels] was wholly unnecessary.”

* Christianity not mysterious.

ry.”*

“ ry.”* Of course it was not conferred, SERMON
 or, in their own words, “ this high I.
 “ notion of the inspiration of the scrip-
 “ tures, of the Gospel in particular, is
 “ contrary to fact.”†

But though the gospels were not dictated by particular inspiration; “ yet,” says the author last quoted, “ they may be termed *in some degree* inspired writings, as they contain a faithful detail of the doctrine of Christ, which he received immediately from God.” Yes, admitting his representation of them, they are just in such degree inspired, as other true historical details are. For, according to the account of Christ, which those writers advance, where is the great difference between him and Socrates? They were both endowed by God with a greater degree of wisdom, than other men possessed; for all wisdom is from

* Priestley’s Harmony of the Gospels.

† Lindsey’s Address to the two Universities.

God:

SERMON God : neither of them left behind him
I. any works of his own ; and the History
of their Lives and Doctrines was each
written by their respective disciples. The
gospels therefore are just upon an equal
footing of inspiration with the dialogues
of Plato. And the religion, which in-
stead of strict Christianity is under these
refinements proposed, in its full extent
amounts to these two points : the prac-
tice of the precepts of the gospel, as
far as, considered in the light of a system
of morals, we approve them ; and a
belief of its doctrines, so far as we may
judge, the Evangelists “ had been care-
“ ful to put down, with fidelity and
“ exactness, what they had seen and
“ heard themselves, respecting their *di-*
“ *vine* master Jesuſ,” (the denial of
whose *divinity* by the bye is an especial
tenet of the writer, I am now citing)
“ as also what they had learned from
“ other competent witneſſes.”*

* Lindsey's Address, &c.

Here

Here we see the design fairly unfold- SERMON
ed; which, as far as its influence may I.
extend, must weaken the obligation of
the gospel precepts, and effectually do
its doctrines away: it fits those to every
conscience, and invalidates the authority,
that enforces these. Yet do the propa-
gators of those tenets assume the title of
Christians; open conventicles to the pre-
tended honour of that Lord, whom they
have thus degraded; and affect to form
their religion on those scriptures, they
have robbed of the strongest character-
istic of truth.

Such is the unfixt, variable system of
faith and morals, which the Socinian
holds forth. The Deist, more candid,
as more open, denies all revelation; and
affects to own no other law, than that
of nature. He pretends the foundation
of his religion to be laid in reason; and
its rule of conduct to consist in the di-
rection of that reason, and the apparent
aptitude and propriety of things. Mo-

SERMON ^{I.} ral fitness, the object of his idolatry,
beckons him to paths which she hath shaped; and which, she promises, the conduct she prescribes will strew with flowers. She tells him, the sole end of man's existence here is, like that of the Leviathan in the deep, *to sport and take his pastime therein*; she bids him pursue and enjoy his own temporal happiness; and, saving his own happiness, to consult for, and promote, the happiness of others. She addresses him in the reprobated words of the apostle; *eat and drink, for to morrow we die.* Enjoy the good things of this world, while they are in thy power; for this end were ye placed here, for this end were they given: and who knows what a day *may* bring forth.

Palatable reasoning this to the passions and appetites of human nature: and captivating the religion; which on such easy terms makes both worlds our own! For moral fitness, that measures duty by the line of reason, which again is regulated, or at least strongly influenced, by inclination,

inclination, will easily persuade her voluntary ; that by employing his superfluities on objects in need, by dealing out his bread to the hungry, and cloathing the naked wanderer, he purchases a licence to indulge himself in whatever practices his reason, thus biased by appetite, may seem to sanction. He may laugh at superstition and indulgences : but were matters fairly and honestly explained ; it would be difficult to determine, in favour of which the divine voice of wisdom may decide.

The practice of a warm and diffusive benevolence is certainly a duty, highly incumbent on us to discharge : yet are we not to lay the whole stress of religion on it. Christianity represents it as only one part, and the inferior part too, of *the law and the prophets* : and reason taught the heathen, that, apart from the social and relative duties, there is a duty and service owing only, and immediately, to God. The duty of benevolence claims

SERMON
I.

SERMON our regard, even as an act of religion ;
I. but not exclusively : it demands our observance ; but not to the neglect of equally, or perhaps more, important ones. It is among the *things, which ought to be done*, but on account of which *others are not to be left undone.*

There is however a brilliancy, it must be acknowledged, in this fashionable religion ; which is made to consist in a discrimination of moral rectitude, and a cultivation of the relative and social duties, particularly that of charity. It lays hold on our tenderest affections, it interests mankind in its favour, it *covers*, not compensates for, but conceals, or hides, *a multitude of sins.*

The passage just cited, men, whose religion sits easy on them, those good casuists, who would secure to themselves the next world, without giving up the pleasures of this, are very apt through ignorance to mistake, or misrepresent through

through design : from thence alledging the sanction of scriptural authority, to justify a kind of commutation for sin. Whereas the apostle's intention, in the use of the expression, being to inculcate the practice of brotherly love and charity, which our Lord and Master had particularly pressed upon his disciples, declaring it should be a badge of their discipleship, he makes use of that strong expression ; only as intimating, that it was a virtue of so bright and luminous a nature, as would attract the notice, and conciliate the good opinion of mankind, hiding by its lustre a multitude of little faults.

Take reason, or revelation for your guide ; and you will find both the one, and the other, inculcate our duty to God, as the first and great duty : yet doth this favourite religion of the Deist, with all the social virtues in its train, leave it entirely out of the question. “ *Quod supra nos, nihil ad nos ;* ” is an apho-

SERMON ism ever in the mouth of those, who
I.
own no other religion than that. And
thus, under the affectation of honour-
ing the Deity by a distant humility, they
are led to regard Him with indifference
and neglect. "He is too elevated,"
reason they, "for us reptiles of a day
"even in thought to approach him.
"We are arguing in the dark, when
"we dispute about his nature and at-
"tributes: and without being acquain-
"ted with his nature and attributes, we
"cannot acceptably worship Him: but
"not to worship Him acceptably and in
"truth, is false religion: and false reli-
"gion is worse than no religion at all."

But this fluent train of argument is
false in every article. In giving us rea-
son to discover that there is such a Be-
ing as God, our Creator hath declared
it a duty to employ our thoughts on
Him: and however little He hath been
pleased to discover of Himself; that
little it is the highest prerogative of our
nature

nature to look up to, and the most glorious exercise of the intellectual faculties to investigate. Nor are we on this subject so much in the dark, as scepticism may pretend : want of demonstration is no proof of falsehood ; nor ought it to be any discouragement to the pursuit of truth. Without that perfect comprehension of the divine nature, which human presumption may demand ; it is asserted, that we may pay to our Creator a reasonable service : and it is denied, that a false religion is worse than no religion at all. It may be so ; but not necessarily. Considered in itself, and apart from the accidental malignity of its tenets, even a false religion is as much more acceptable to God, than no religion whatever ; as an imperfect endeavour to please, is preferable to non-exertion and neglect. In a word, the knowledge of God, which, imperfect as it is, He hath stamped upon the human mind, sufficiently evinces ; that to contemplate Him, to acquaint ourselves with Him,

SERMON in order to investigate how in the most acceptable manner to serve Him, is not above us : it is a duty incumbent on us ; it produces in us a love of Him, and fulfils the first command.

If the excellent wisdom of that full and perfect religion, which in doctrine and precept the gospel exhibits, we contrast with the two substitutes of it above described ; we shall find it neither vague, nor defective. In respect of our duty to God, it teaches ; that to *love him with all our heart, and all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength* ; and agreeably to such an inflamed, enlarged affection, to serve Him ; is the first obligation of man. And for the regulation of our conduct to our neighbour, a proper discharge of the social and relative duties, it lays down the completest rules in the shortest compass. “ To love our neighbour, as ourselves ;” and “ to do “ to all men, as we would they should “ do unto us ;” are maxims, that form the

the ground work of the best and completest system of Ethics, moral philosophy ever framed.

SERMON
I.

Its doctrines are authoritative and express; its precepts clear and obligatory. However mens appetites, inclinations, humours, or caprice, may differ and vary; true religion will be always the same: a perfect unchangeable rule of action. And though its precepts and doctrines we may pervert and wrest; we must take heed, that in so doing, we wrest them not to our own destruction. Plain and simple in its institution, it seeks no adventitious colourings; free from defects, it eludes not scrutiny, nor shuns the light: but the more we see, and know, and are acquainted with it, the more desireable doth it appear to us.

Reason is the touchstone, on which the truth of religion is to be tried. Let the Mahometan say, **BELIEVE**: and guard the sacred Koran from the scrupulous

SERMON pulous eye of rational enquiry. Christ
I. hath said, *search the scriptures; for they
are they, which testify of me.* And never
have books been more critically, and
more enviously searched, than they:
while from those trials they have ac-
quired new strength; rising from the
fiery ordeals with all the acquisition of
lustre, trial and truth can give. The
religion, which declines an appeal to the
tribunal of reason, is always to be sus-
pected. To her the Christian commits
the guidance of his faith: her sacred
principles will support its authority;
when from the fastidious countenance of
Deism the veil of prejudice shall drop;
and the insidious schemes of modern re-
finers shall, like air-blown bubbles, float
for their moment, amuse light minds,
and die away: when unstable notions,
and vain conceits, by wild imaginations
suggested, and through love of novelty
entertained, shall by sober judgment be
weighed, and in the cool hour of reflec-
tion relinquished. Schemes of religion,
such

such as these, may continue for a time ; SERMON
but, for want of a solid foundation, at I.
length the baseless fabric must fall.

I. On these principles, in the dis-
courses, which on the present occasion
engage my attention, my design is, by
a chain of arguments deduced from the
foundation of all religion, the divine ex-
istence, summarily to evince the ground
and credibility of the Revelation of Jesus
Christ. In proof of that first great
truth, the Being of a God, I shall have
little occasion to dwell on arguments
against the direct Atheist : the fool,
who says in his heart, there is no God. I
shall content myself therefore with ad-
vancing such only, as may be most sa-
tisfactory and convincing : and pass on
2dly to him, who, acknowledging the
Being of a God, by a denial of miracles
doth in effect limit his power ; a species
of Anti-Theism scarcely less wicked,
than direct Atheism itself. And I will
3dly advert to that more refined Atheist ;
whose

SERMON whose desperate principles of Materialism tend to degrade the Divine nature.

II. From the evidence of God's existence, we will proceed to the proofs of his superintending providence; a particular, as well as general, providence: that is, a providence, which not only directs and upholds the world in that ordinary course of nature, that succession of general causes and effects, which was in the first arrangement of things established; but such as with all-pervading eye observes, and guiding hand directs each lesser movement; every minute occurrence, as well as every extraordinary event.

III. And from these adduced proofs of God's existence and providence, I infer the duty of religion: that is, the proper acknowledgment of God's creative power, and upholding goodness, by acts of adoration and praise; obligatory on

on all beings endowed with a degree of REASON
reason, equal to that of man. I.

IV. But though reason be thus competent to point out the necessity of religion; facts and experience evince its insufficiency to direct us aright in its doctrines and precepts, and the purity of worship: from whence follows the necessity of a Revelation.

V. And on this subject I shall confine my thoughts to the nature and extent of the Revelation made to the Jews: the completion and perfection of which were destined in the Messiah.

VI. In examining the ancient prophecies of the Messiah, my principal object will be to note and illustrate those particulars, in which the Jews had mistaken and misinterpreted them: not only in referring to worldly conquests, pomp, and power, descriptions, which with no human character could comport;

SERMON port; but in their gross misapprehension of those prophecies also, which as plainly allude to his humiliated and suffering state. And as those contrasting prophecies never did meet in any other of their great characters, nor ever can, but in one, who lived the life, performed the miracles, and experienced the sufferings, which Jesus did: they will not only demonstrate, that he was the **Messiah**; but as assuredly prove, that he possessed powers more than human, and exercised an authority, that marked his origin, as his mission, divine.

VII. From the authorities of the Old Testament, respecting the nature and dignity of the Messiah, I propose to pursue my investigation of the subject through the Scriptures of the New; and therein to enquire, 1st, what is the general scope, and uniform tenour of those scriptures, respecting the Pre-existence and Divinity of Christ: and 2dly to meet the objections to those doctrines in

in the full force, in which the leaders SERMON
of a revived sect have pressed them. ^{I.}
And in this inquiry may the spirit of
truth direct me, through Jesus Christ
our Lord : &c. &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ROM. i. 10, &c.

For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead.

SERMON
II.

THE existence of God is so clearly manifested, and his creative power so far understood, saith the apostle; that even the Heathen are without excuse, in not paying Him that purity of worship, which his sublime nature and Godhead require. And indeed reason doth supply us with so cogent arguments of such a being, and those attributes of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, inseparable from Him, which St. Paul styles

stiles “ the invisible things of God” ; as SERMON
nothing but the most determined pre- ^{II.} judices can withstand.

One would conceive that we need but open our eyes on the fair frame of things about us, and question our hearts how came they here : and our hearts would answer, *this hath God done* ; *perceiving that it was his work*. The Atheist however hath discovered the way of making a world, without calling to his assistance the power and wisdom of God.

“ Nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus unquam ; ”

is the principle, on which he proceeds to erect his specious building : how far it may be admitted, we will in the sequel examine.

I. If at the first, or from eternity, NOTHING existed ; there never could have existed any thing : so far just and

C true

SERMON true is the position above assumed.
II. SOMETHING therefore existed from all eternity.

That SOMETHING was either matter ; or a substance different from matter. Inertion being an essential property of matter, mere matter could never have produced itself ; for self-existence implies activity : it could not have produced itself even in a Chaotic, shapeless mass. Something therefore must from eternity have existed, possest of active and higher powers, than matter possest. That SOMETHING we stile God.

But admitting for a moment the former supposition, and conceiving of matter, as an eternal existence ; from whence shall we suppose it to have derived those beautiful and varying shapes, which we now behold ? On the most favourable supposition of its origin, a rude, indigested mass ; from whence did it become possest of its power of diversifying its motions and operations in such

Such a manner, as to produce the won- SERMON
derful variety of beings, that are found ^{II.} ~~scattered~~
Scattered upon the face of the earth ?

The atomists saw the defect of this scheme of Atheism : and therefore to self-existent matter they gave a power, which does not belong to it ; they conferred motion on it, and introduced a million of self-existent, dancing atoms : a system of heathen philosophy, which, however blazoned with the ornaments of verse, is much of a piece with that of their theology ; both highly poetic : and, notwithstanding the encomium, with which a modern historian of no small name hath distinguished the *pretty* theology of Julian,* both exceedingly absurd.

Necessary self-existence is the prime attribute of the Deity : something self-

* Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

SERMON ^{II.} existent is God. A million therefore of self-existing, self-moving atoms, are a million of Gods. And when those millions of atoms had danced themselves into shapeable existences, seas, rivers, mountains, trees, and the like: it was natural enough for the plastic powers of poetic imagination, to personify those eternal existences; who, according to the scheme of Epicurean philosophy, were Deities ready made to their hand: and hence, their Oreades, Naiades, &c. their Gods and Goddesses, of land, and of rivers, and even of the bowels of the earth.

But supposing for a moment the existence of motion, without admitting a mover: there is still wanting design. For a fortuitous dance of atoms is no more equal to the creation of a world, in which there are such marks of infinite wisdom, harmony, and design, as this of ours displays: than a fortuitous jumble of letters, to the composition of an epic

epic poem; or of colours, to the delineation of a regular picture. (For on the most advantageous idea of what matter is, and motion can do: that is no more than an inert, chaotic, mass; and this a blind impulse, eternally proceeding without destination.

SERMON
II.

To make one concession further, and suppose, upon another system of Atheism, matter to have eternally existed in the beautiful variety of shape and form, in which we now behold it; without some external support, all those beautiful appearances of things must long ago have sunk into their original nothing. For matter, such as the world is composed of, being in itself liable to corruption, animate substances, as well as inanimate, having all their rise, their progress, and decay; their self-existence does not imply a greater degree of absurdity, than their self-support from all eternity in the same form and state.

C 3

From

SERMON
II.
From this view of the ~~incompetence~~ of matter, considered in every light, to self-existence and eternity, we must admit some superior principle ; and acknowledge an eternal self-existent cause : something of power to create matter, which in itself possesses no active powers, consequently not the power of self-existence : an existent cause, possessing also wisdom and design, equal to the diversification observable in this fair frame of things about us. And that being is God.

To this beauty, order, and regularity, so discernible in the universe, the apostle in my text particularly appeals ; in proof of the existence and perfections of the Deity. And if this argument could be thought to want any corroborative ; I might instance the universal consent of mankind, in all ages of the world, and in every region : which concurrence of assent must be a strong presumption of truth.

For

For it contradicts every principle of ^{SERMON}
^{II.} reason, to imagine that by the constitution
of human nature false principles
should have been generally and uniformly
infused into our minds ; and that we
should be naturally inclined to error :
that, in this great truth of God's existence,
the whole world should be taught
to err ; except the few, whose interest
it may be, to wish the doctrine false,
that they may live to the full enjoyment
of their appetites and inclinations,
without the molestation of conscience,
and the alarms of fear. Nor can any
other certain and general cause be as-
signed for so general an opinion, except
the nature of the human mind : which
hath this notion of a Deity born with
it ; and, as we may thence conclude,
stamped upon it by the author of na-
ture, the Deity himself. But I forbear
to pursue this argument ; or to dwell
longer on this part of my subject :
hastening to the second proposition ;
which was to reconcile the supersedure

SERMON of the general laws of nature, in the
case of miracles, with the wisdom and
goodness of that infinite being, who to
the operation of nature assigned those
laws.

II. To acknowledge a Deity, and yet tie Him down by suppositions, which, if pushed to their utmost length, would leave Him with limited powers ; is to throw over Atheism so thin a veil, as hides nothing of it, but its name. This however is the tendency of an argument against the reality of miracles, which has been maintained with the greatest confidence ; and is founded on the *impossibility* of them, consistent with the attributes of the Deity. A miracle being a supersedure or alteration of the established course of nature, it is contended ; that if such alteration be for the better, the course of nature was not originally established with infinite wisdom ; if for the worse, it is an alteration not consistent with infinite goodness.

This

This argument, for it is a favourite ^{SERMON} one, hath been offered in another form, ^{II.} and with a happy change of words. “ God,” it is argued “ cannot supersede the course of things, he has established, without violating the laws of nature.” The word, *violate*, adds no new force to the argument: but it is aptly calculated to fling imputed censure on the opposite opinion: as maintaining the reality of those extraordinary operations, at the expence of violating the sacred laws of God and nature.

In form more full, and stronger terms, I offer the argument; in the direct words of a celebrated essay, by zealous partizans still dealt out in detail, and held up in triumph. “ A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature: and as a firm and unalterable experience hath established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as intire, as any

“ argument

SERMON " argument from experience can be
II. " possibly imagined." *

The first part of the proposition, it is plain to observe, is an assertion without proof : unless the subsequent clause be intended to substantiate one, in the assumption, that *firm and unalterable experience hath established these laws*. But *firm and unalterable* experience constitutes such proof no longer, than till these laws are superseded ; and then *firm and unalterable* experience proves in particular cases and for special purposes, a deviation from those general laws. And such deviation is as strongly established by *firm and unalterable experience*, as the former regularity itself. Nor can it, being God's immediate operation, or at least an act under his permission, with more propriety be stiled a violation of the laws of nature ; than the mountainous waves of the sea, proudly overleap-

* See Hume's Essay on Miracles.

ing

ing the bounds which He had set them, SERMON
II. deluging whole regions, and ingulphing cities, — or the dark spots, which astronomers observe increasingly to incrust the bright orb of the sun, in possible diminution both of its heat and light, — can be charged on his works, as violations of the general laws, He had assigned to their operation.

He, that had a power to direct nature according to certain general laws, must also have a power to control, and alter her movements. And such alteration, or control, is as much the act, either mediately or immediately, of infinite power and wisdom, as the general law itself. It is a part of that general law; which was formed with such a specific deviation. Whatever weight therefore may be ascribed to this argument; it in reality possesses none. It stands not in our way in proof, that such supersedure of the general laws of nature is impossible; as being incompatible either with infinite wisdom or power. The only question

SERMON ^{II.} question then is, whether human testimony be sufficient to prove it: which will fall under an article of future discussion; being a point of enquiry, with which in the present case we are not concerned. Nothing more is in this state of the subject contended for; than that God can supersede the general laws of nature, without incurring the rash imputation of violating them.

But the author was led into this argument, by narrow notions of the divine agency. He has adverted to the Deity, as an artist; and to the structure of this world, as a complicated machine, of his framing; consisting of a variety of mechanic powers, which he puts into motion, assigning general movements to every distinct part; turns the piece of finished mechanism out of his hands, and leaves it in its various parts to pursue its destined operations: which it will invariably perform, unless some derangement of the parts impede and interrupt

terrupt its motions. Now were this re- SERMON
presentation of the Deity adequate and II.
just ; the argument adduced must be
admitted of no inconsiderable weight.
For as the great machine must have
come out of the hands of its Creator
perfectly good, and was left without fur-
ther attention to continue the course, He
had prescribed to it ; every deviation
from the order and course, He had so
prescribed, would be a deterioration of
his work.

But doth such an idea comport with
the Creator of heaven and earth ? And
indeed what human idea will ? Certainly
however the idea of God, at first crea-
ting and giving movements to the world,
and then leaving it to pursue those mo-
tions no longer under his inspection,
without his farther regard, without sup-
port : — such idea doth surely ill suit
the attributes of omniscience and omni-
presence. In his operations he knows
neither beginning, middle, nor end.

With

SERMON With Him no distance distinguishes
II. time or place : He looks neither back-
wards nor forwards ; the idea of **FIRST**,
or **LAST**, notes not his actions : who is
always, every where ; and at one com-
prehensive glance views every minute
movement of every part of his innume-
rable works, in every period of their
operations.

When at the first, if, in application to
God, we may properly use such a term as
FIRST, He made the element of water
yield to the impression of the human
step ; He made it also on a particular oc-
cation to resist it : and the one particu-
lar occasional power was as much the
given power of God, and as early given,
as the other. And this given power to
that part of nature, which performs it,
is his law. With the same almighty
FIAT, which put the world in motion,
He for a moment stopped the movements
of some of its parts. At the same mo-
ment, He saw them perform their accus-
tomed

tomed revolutions, and saw them halt : *SERMON*
when, in scripture language, *the sun* ^{IL}
stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the
valley of Ajalon. At the same instant,
and with the same glance, he sees the
sun travelling in his strength, and the
moon's reflected beams enlivening the
gloom of night ; and also beholds, at
the destined period of their dissolu-
tion, the one *turned into blood*, and the
face of the other *darkened* : His hand
alike directs both operations. Respec-
ting Him, with whom time is not, when
we speak of periods and of times ; we
should keep ever in mind, that we use
those terms, because we know not how
to express our ideas of Him more suit-
ably. But thus far our ideas of God
may attain : that acting always, as He
demonstratively does, and present every
where, as He necessarily is, when the
operations of nature are most eccentric,
equally as when most regular, they per-
form the divine will : and the unerring
rectitude, with which He rules, or stops,
her

SERMON her motions, ever preserves the course,
II. that nature may pursue, from the im-
putation of **VIOLATION**.

III. The point, which under the article of God's existence I proposed in the third and last place to consider, was the general principle of Materialism: as of tendency to degrade the divine nature. For when we magnify matter above its just claim and pretensions, and ascribe to it perfections, which it doth not possess; when we attribute to it perception, memory, reflection, those intellectual faculties, a ray of divinity, if indeed the image of God be in any degree stamped upon us: we must take care we be not led step by step, at last to degrade the divine nature, and materialise even the Deity himself.

That such dangerous tendency in the principles of materialism is not matter of vain presumption, but of fact; the direct acknowledgment of one of the
most

most determined materialists of this age SERMON
evinces; who observes, that "the doc- II.
"trine of the materiality of man has
"been charged with leading to Athe-
"ism."* And then in the very same
work, while he affects to remove, he pro-
ceeds to establish, the charge: employing
two sections to prove, that "the nature
"of the Deity is material." The an-
tient philosophy of Epicurus conferred
motion on self-existent matter: the mo-
dern materialist, more bountiful, endows
it with perceptive and intellectual powers.
If that were Atheism; I fear this will
rank little lower. Such principles, if
they lead men to conceive of God, not
as he is, but *turn the glory of God into a*
corruptible nature, are equally derogatory
from the sublime nature of the Deity, as
direct Atheism itself. And the author's
candid acknowledgment of the existence
of such a charge is, on the subject we
are now investigating, sufficient to justify

* Priestley's Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit.

SERMON my endeavours to guard against principles of so desperate tendency.

II.

The chain of reasoning, on which the Materialist proceeds, supposes, that to enable one being to act upon another, they must each possess some common property: the mind therefore, if qualified to act upon the body, must have some common property of matter; and for the same reason so must the Deity himself. But what has the properties of matter, is matter. This is in brief the argument in support of the doctrine of materialism: and such is the desperate length, to which it goes.

Let us examine this train of reasoning, and argue on the fact in the extreme: let us suppose the truth of the conclusion, that the Deity possesses some property common to matter; and ask what known property it is. Not inaction, most assuredly: for every attribute of the Deity implies activity. Not solidity:

dity : for in Him, whether the Christian's God, or the heathen philosopher's <sup>SERMON
II.</sup> *anima mundi, we live, and move, and have our being.* Not shape : for that has bounds. In short, not any property of matter, that can be ascertained. Every power of the mind, and every property observable in matter, are so essentially different ; that the idea of homogeneity in the two substances is too extravagant to be admitted on any other ground, than a direct proof of the impossibility of the action of spirit on matter, without the existence of some common property. Our incapacity to comprehend in what manner such action, so circumstanced, can be exerted, is not sufficient, against every appearance that it is so, to destroy the possibility of the fact.

Yet however bold the assertion is, that spirit *cannot* act upon matter without possessing some common property of it ; and however false it may be : it must with proper diffidence be acknowledged,

D 2 ed,

SERMON ed, that it is difficult to conceive how
II. thought can come into immediate contact with a substance so apparently opposite to it, as matter. But humbly considering how little we know of the laws, by which God governs the world ; though ignorant of the cause, may we not, instructed by the effect, suppose some secret law of nature existing, some fine link between the two substances, by which the mind may receive its sensations and ideas ; and through which it may exercise its operations, excite motions, and perform actions ? We know, in the chain of material beings how nice the links of nature ; we know, how nearly the quadruped approaches the feathered tribe ; how nearly the inhabitant of the watery element him, that grazes on the plain ; the vegetative the animal being. And I conceive it not improbable, much less impossible, which is sufficient to urge against a direct impossibility ; that there may be some fine link between the material and the immaterial world, some

some medium of action, which, if known, would satisfy the doubts of philosophic arrogance. SERMON II.

My design in this discourse has been, to establish the proof of God's existence, as the foundation of all religion: and with all humility so far to investigate the Divine nature, as forming an object of religious worship; of that pure form of worship especially, the truth of which in the sequel of these discourses I shall proceed to evince. And if the reflections on this subject, which I have now offered, have any weight; they will conduce to mould our minds to the study of ourselves. And when, convinced of our own weakness and imperfection, we raise our thoughts to the contemplation of the Deity; we shall, from what we are, from what we feel within, and behold without us, derive irrefragable and increasing proofs of his existence. We shall learn to think humbly of ourselves, and exaltedly of

SERMON that infinitely perfect and adorable Being, who called us from nothing ; and gave us all that we at present enjoy, or in reversion hope for. And when the enlarged mind expatiates on his power ; we shall tremble at the idea of fixing any thing like a limit to it : when we endeavour to search into the inscrutable treasures of his wisdom ; we shall exert every fertile power of imagination, to admire and revere it : and when we presume to employ our thoughts on his nature ; we shall separate from it every idea, that suits not with the highest excellence we can attribute to the most sublime and exalted Being : and after all this stretch of heart, and soul, and strength, to think worthily of Him, we shall have to lament the weakness of our conception, and the imperfection of our ideas ; satisfied that, high as the enraptured mind can raise them, they fall beneath, infinitely beneath, the elevated subject, on which they are employed.

SER-

SERMON III.

Job, xxxi. 4.

*Doth He not see my ways, and count all
my steps?*

FROM the evidence of God's existence, which was the subject of my last discourse; we will now proceed to the proofs, we have of his providence. It has been shewn, that the world is the production of a Being infinite in wisdom and power, whom we stile God: the point of doctrine next to be proved is, that this World, this whole system of created things, is super-intended, governed, and directed by that Almighty God, who made it. And indeed there is

D 4 such

SERMON such a natural and necessary connection
III. between the belief of God's existence,
and superintendence; that he, who be-
lieves the one, would he think consist-
ently, must believe the other likewise.
If we believe there is a God, who made
the world; we must likewise believe that
the same God, who made the world,
doth govern it too. For matter is as in-
competent to support it's own existence,
as to create itself; nor is chance better
qualified to govern a world, than to
make one: and we have already seen,
how unapt matter is for the active office
of creation; and how unequal chance is
to the formation of a world, which dis-
plays such harmony, regularity, and
consistence. But from appearances let
us proceed to proofs.

The power of God, displayed in the
government of the world, may be consi-
dered in a double view:

First,

First, in respect to the material world ; SERMON
in which He is acknowledged as ordering, and directing the changes and revolutions of nature : His will, and governing power, being the universal law, which it observes.

III.

And secondly we may consider the superintendence of God, as displayed in a moral and religious view ; in His dispensations and government, respecting the rational world : including the general state, œconomy, and conduct of mankind. And under this head I propose a further enquiry into the reality of a particular, as well as general, providence : addressed to the consideration of those, who, under the affectation of enlarged ideas of the Divine nature, pretend to suppose it an opinion unworthy of Him, to ascribe to his immediate interposition occurrences, which are sometimes styled providential ; but which, though apparently extraordinary, fall within the common course prescribed to nature, however

SERMON however hidden from us, and secret may
III. be the immediate causes of them.

I. First, then, the general notion of providence is God's care of all the creatures He has made; which must consist in preserving and upholding their beings and natures, and in such acts of government, as the good order of the world, the arrangement of things, their secret dependencies, and correspondent effects require. And that there is such a manifest general ordination and adaptation of things in the natural world, that they exactly suit the purposes of each other, and contribute mutually to the universal good of the great whole; that the common necessities of mankind are graciously provided for, and supplied in the usual course of things, and according to the general laws of nature, which infinite wisdom and goodness originally established; that the heavenly bodies are constituted, and their movements directed, with exact proportion to one another in their

their several stations and circuits ; are SERMON truths, that have with suitable expressions of admiration been observed and acknowledged by those, who have penetrated farthest into studies and enquiries of that kind.

III.

When we proceed to a more particular investigation of this interesting doctrine of a divine providence, the mind is struck with the observed subsistence of things in the same structure ; and with the same progression, through the several ages of their being. In this consideration is involved a two-fold circumstance; their stability, and their arrangement : the one inconceivable without active intelligence, and the other without support.

Though neither matter, nor motion, nor both united, have been found in themselves competent to the creation of the world : there can be no doubt, but, under the direction of the Divine architect,

SERMON III. **teet**, they constitute the composition of the visible universe. It was not therefore wonderful, that some philosophers should have conferred on them the principle of self-existence: and it was consistent with such opinion, to attribute to them the powers of conservation and support. But from the idea of matter, attenuate and modify it as you will, inactivity, it has been already observed, is inseparable. If therefore essentially passive, and consequently not self-existent, but created; impotent to produce, it must be equally impotent to preserve itself. For in reality how doth production differ from preservation, except as an act exerted from its continuance? One moment of active being implies, in an inert mass, as considerable a difficulty as another. It requires the same power to confirm a second moment of action, as to assign a first; a third, as a second: and so on through all the parts of duration. And if so, from the same principle must be derived the continuance of

of the world's existence, as the origin ^{SERMON}
of it. ^{III.}

In the same manner with regard to motion ; we cannot conceive of it, without admitting a cause. From a blind and senseless cause can proceed only a blind and indefinite effect : that is, in the present instance a tendency every way ; which is plainly equivalent to a tendency no way, or to rest. A tendency, in any given or definite way, denotes selection and direction ; and these again, immediately or ultimately, an external intelligent mover. How then can that, which could neither begin, nor guide, continue itself ? There is besides in every impulse a diminution of motion : so that whatever momentum is communicated to the body impelled, re-action is known to take from the impellent. What then can repair this continual loss ; or, in other words, support a constant motion, like the revolutions of the globe in one regular tenor ; except an incessant

SERMON cessant action : which brings us at once
III. to the incessant intervention of a super-
intending Deity ?

Let us next advert to the additional circumstance of arrangement. Survey, and it is a delightful entertainment to survey, the productions and provisions of nature : you will perceive on the first observation variety, curiosity, co-operation, and mutual subservience ; successions without failure, greatness without disproportion, complication without confusion. Observe particularly the nice disposition of the universe, of which this orb of ours forms a part ; the distribution of the larger planets in wider and remoter orbits, that their gravity may not interfere with the safety or velocity of the smaller ; the measured distance of the earth from the sun, whose approach or recedure with any sensible variation might endanger its being, or all its comforts.

Then

Then let us bring our reflections nearer home ; and observe this globe of earth that we inhabit, and its productions. What an elegant and beneficial assemblage do we behold springing from mere mould, a cold, lumpish, crumbling substance ; not grateful to any sense, nor possessed in appearance of any prolific virtue ! With what exquisite art, accommodating structure to character and exertion, are particular creatures organised ; severally destined to form and fill up a compact, regular, and complete system : a system, the composition of which consisting of materials infinitely numerous, infinitely diversified, hath stood for near six thousand years one and the same ; uninjured in its form, unimpaired in its parts, unobstructed in its movements ! Consider this complex wonder ; and who can hesitate to conclude, that every thing is sustained, guided, and uniformly reinstated, by a vigilant providence, “ great in council, and mighty in work.”

For

SERMON **III.** For in short wherever there is an effect, it must have a cause answerable ; a determinate effect, a determining cause ; a perpetual or periodical effect, a permanent one. Thus order implies design, symmetry contrivance, beauty workmanship, regularity guidance, unerring regularity wisdom, limitation influence, utility forecast. And all these, existing in infinite circumstances, declare an infinite mind, operating in the appointment of them with infinite discernment, and in the preservation of them with infinite attention ; which is in other words, a presiding providence. On this subject engaged, one cannot help giving scope to imagination, and reflecting on the infinite pleasure it will give the enlarged mind, when admitted to a nearer view of things, than our converse in this world admits, to explore the curiosities and exhaustless wonders of nature : to view, with what art and contrivance each particular creature is made ; and how the several parts of this great

great machine are fitted to each other, SERMON
and continue on from generation to ge-
neration a regular and uniform world.
Mutually connected and dependent, each
is fitted to the uses and purposes of their
several natures, all serviceable and assist-
ant to one another, and every individual
necessary to the whole.

On such a survey, to matter and mo-
tion, to every cause a fertile imagination
can suggest, analogy will force us to add
design. For by a fortuitous concourse of
things we see nothing regular effected in
works of art: by what rule of reasoning
then are we to expect it in the opera-
tions of nature? And with design, we
must admit of a designer: that is, a Be-
ing of wisdom, to plan; and of power,
the extent of which we measure by the
execution of the plan. In nature's
works consider the design, and examine
the execution of it; and impute them,
who can, to less than infinite wisdom
and power. Such were the reflections,
which, Claudio tells us, cured his

E doubts

SERMON doubts respecting a superintending providence : the description is elegant, and the reasoning just ; with that description, the elegance of the passage, and the propriety of sentiment it conveys, will I trust plead my excuse for concluding the argument drawn from observations on the material world.

" Sæpe * mihi dubiam traxit fententia mentem,
 " Curarent superi terras, an nullus inesset
 " Rector, & incerto fluerent mortalia casu.
 " Ast cum dispositi quæfissim foedera mundi,
 " Præscriptosque mari fines, annisque meatus,
 " Et lucis noctisque vices ; tunc omnia rebar
 " Consilio firmata Dei, qui lege moveri
 " Sidera, qui fruges diverso tempore nasci,
 " Qui variam Phœben alieno jusserit igne
 " Compleri, Solemque suo ; porrexerit undis
 " Littora ; tellurem medio libraverit axe."

CLAUD. in Ruf. lib. iii.

II. I proceed 2dly to consider the superintendence of God as displayed in a moral

* Oft have I doubted, whether power divine
Direct this world with wisdom and design ;

Or

moral and religious view, in his dispensations and government, respecting the rational world ; including the general state, œconomy, and conduct of mankind.

SERMON
III.

And in this discussion the first great argument, that offers, is the general administration of the world in favour of virtue. Vice is not always punished here, nor virtue always rewarded ; nor indeed ought it to be so : for then this world would be a state of rewards and punishments ; and not, as it is, a state

Or all things rise, decay, recede, advance,
Cause and effect the random work of chance.
But when the frame of nature meets my mind,
It's various links harmoniously combined ;
The bounds, that check the ocean's wild career,
The destined periods of the measured year ;
The brightly-beaming day, the scowling night,
Succeeding darkness, and returning light :
My doubts are banish'd, 'gainst each vain surmise,
God stands reveal'd, all-mighty, and all-wise.
By-Him the bounties of the earth are given,
He framed the laws, that rule the orbs of heaven :
He bade the ocean, keep its channell'd place,
He hung the well-poised world in empty space.

SERMON of trial and probation : and thus
III. would one of the clearest and strongest
arguments in proof of a future state be
taken away. But though there be wise
reasons, why some virtuous men should
be unhappy in this life, and some vicious
men prosperous ; for this world not be-
ing a place of judgment, but a state of
preparation, divine justice does not re-
quire, that every good or bad man
should, according to his works, be re-
spectively recompensed here : yet the
wisdom, and goodness, and justice of God
do require, that in general virtue should
be rewarded, and sin punished ; and that
in such degrees, and in such a manner,
as shall lay all reasonable restraints on
the lusts and passions of men, and pro-
portionably promote and encourage the
exertion of their virtues. How far the
face of things about us tends to confirm
this opinion, let us next inquire ; con-
tenting ourselves, where demonstration
cannot be had, with the highest degree
of probability.

It

It is impossible to parcel out by weight or admeasurement the quantity of good and evil, that falls out in this life to respective individuals ; so as demonstratively to ascertain the fact, that even in this world there is a considerable preponderation of happiness in favour of virtue : but as the truth of this opinion forms a very powerful argument, in proof of a wise and good presiding power ; I submit the following reflections in support of it. When we observe mankind in general, the wicked as well as the religious, *him that feareth God, and him that feareth Him not*, so anxious as they appear to be, that their children should pursue virtuous courses ; we must conclude such a general desire to have as general a motive : which is their happiness and prosperity in life. And though this motive, which to the temporalist is a leading one, be to the good and virtuous only secondary : its effect is in both instances the same ; forming an argument from universal consent, that accord-

E 3 ing

SERMON III. ing to the present dispensations of pro-
vidence, or, if this mode of expression
appear an assumption of the point in
doubt, according to the present course of
things, success even in this world is the
consequence of a virtuous conduct.

In proof of this truth, permit me
to refer the argument, in another
shape, to the discrimination of every
man's own judgment. Let us revolve in
our minds a certain number of our friends
and acquaintances, whom we know to
be men of virtue ; and an equal number,
whom we know, or have great reason to
believe, to be vicious characters : then
let us reflect, whether the virtuous or vi-
cious characters appear to enjoy the most
happiness in themselves and their con-
nections ; and from such reflection con-
current opinion, I am persuaded, will
confirm the truth of the assertion " that
" happiness, in the ordinary and gene-
" ral course of things, is even in this
" life the handmaid and attendant on
" virtue."

“ virtue.” And such general dispensation of things, in favour of virtue, is a demonstration of a super-intending providence, equally and infinitely wise and good.

There was a sect of ancient philosophers, who carried this opinion so far; that, to obviate the argument against a wise and good presiding power, deduced from the permission and sufferance of evil, as happening indiscriminately to all men, they denied the reality of it. This caused them to adopt some extraordinary tenets, which led to wild and whimsical inferences. But both the tenets and inferences were less pernicious, and much nearer to truth, than those opposite doctrines; that, to exculpate providence from the apparent irregularities and inequalities in moral dispensations, excluded Him from having any concern in the government of the world: referring it to the management of an imaginary principle, which they

SERMON stiled chance, and thought better calculated to preside in such a mixt and inexplicable state of things. For though it must be acknowledged, that there are evils in life, and that they occasionally happen to the virtuous, as well as the wicked: yet would it on nice examination be found, that those evils are less in degree, and in number fewer, than is generally supposed; and more frequently the consequences of human imprudence, than the querulous disposition of human nature will readily admit.

Scarcely indeed is there a more common subject of declamation and complaint, than the inequality observable in the temporal dispensations of providence. But giving something to self-love, which in our own eyes is apt to magnify our deservings above their real value; something to disappointment, which often fits heavier on our minds, than reason will justify; and something to that depravity of heart, which inclines us to make

make a false estimate of our own happiness, from comparison with the apparent happiness and prosperity of others ; we must acknowledge, there is a preponderation of happiness in this world, sufficient to prove the government of a wise and good providence : involving at the same time such a mixture of evil, in the various course of events, as clearly instructs us to look beyond this scene of things for an exact adjustment of rewards and punishments

In short from a fair and candid view of things about us, however discontent may magnify present dissatisfactions, intricacies into irregularities, trials into hardships, impunity into prosperity ; it appears inconceivable, without admitting a secret restraint on actions or their effects by the immediate interposition of a Divine providence, but that the good would be far greater sufferers, than they are ; and that society, if not dissolved, would be far more deranged and quieted,

SERMON quieted, than we experience it : con-
III. sidering the prevalence of corruption, the
eagerness of rapine, the turbulence of
ambition, the unruliness of passion, and
the malignity of disappointment.

From the consideration of a general, let us next extend our enquiries to the doctrine of a particular, providence : in the admission of which the chief difficulty seems to lie in a narrow mode of conceiving of God, and inadequate terms of expression. We are apt to consider the care and management of the world, agreeably to our ideas of care and management, as a laborious operation : and the mode of expression, we use, contributes to inculcate such ideas. We speak of God's taking charge of the affairs of the world, of His administration of them, of His adjustment of causes and effects, and the like : terms, which we are forced to employ, for want of such as would better suit that infinite and incomprehensible mind ; which at once glances

glances through time and nature, and **SERMON**
III.
with omnipotence of will directs, go- verns, and controls.

Such opinion of the government of the universe, as a work of pains and labour, was I conceive an argument of additional weight to that already suggested ; in inducing the Epicureans, a sect of philosophers considerable both for their learning and numbers, to imagine the government of the universe too troublesome, to engage the attention of the Deity. They considered Him, as by nature necessarily and perfectly happy, and therefore above investing himself with a charge ; which to conduct with uniform and consistent regularity, they supposed, must occasion care and consideration, and of course detract from His felicity. The idea is elegantly described by the Latin poet ; himself a zealous advocate for the doctrine, and the sect.

SERMON
III.
~~~~~

Omnis \* enim per se divum natura necesse + 'st  
Immortalis ævo summâ cum pace fruatur,  
Semota ab nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe ;  
Nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,  
Ipfa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,  
Nec bene pro meritis capitur, nec tangitur Ira.

LUCRETIUS, lib. i.

On this opinion, I have only to observe a narrowness of mind ; which could suppose the direction and management of so small a part of the unbounded works of creation, a care and trouble to its omnipotent Creator. Far be it however from man's presumption, to affect to

\* The gods by fate and nature must enjoy  
Immortal life, and bliss without alloy ;  
Sequester'd far from earth, and earthly things,  
The threats of danger, and of pain the stings :  
In the perfection of their own high powers  
Supremely happy, they require not ours ;  
Our actions all indifferently regard,  
Hold up no scourge, and tender no reward.

+ The word *necesse*, in this passage, seems to allude to FATE : a necessarian principle, which in the Epicurean system, controls even the gods themselves.

point

point out in what manner, He directs SERMON  
and governs His innumerable works; of III.  
which this universe of ours is but a  
point: certainly not by toil and labour;  
nor by any means detracting from su-  
preme felicity. He governs; as He cre-  
ated: and the sublime \* description,  
given by Moses, of His creation of the  
world, will perhaps best suit his govern-  
ment of it too; effected by the influ-  
ence of an energetic volition, unimped-  
ed by difficulties, unincumbered by dis-  
traction.

To suppose every distribution of good  
and evil, of happiness and misery, by  
certain general laws to have been irre-  
versibly ordained to take place in this  
life, when nature was first put in mo-  
tion, is in effect to limit the operations of  
Him, who imposed those laws on na-

\* The passage alluded to is noticed by Longinus, as  
an uncommon instance of the true sublime,

SERMON ture ; and by such restrictions in a degree  
III. to exclude Him from His own works :  
it is taking from Him every other,  
than a sustaining power. Whereas  
by referring such general succession  
of events to a concatenation of causes  
decreed at the formation of all things,  
the wisdom and goodness of God in  
particular instances, and as occasions  
present themselves, applying the esta-  
blished laws of nature to the benefit,  
comfort, and correction of individuals ;  
we learn to reconcile the particular dis-  
pensations of providence with the gene-  
ral course of nature. Thus we know,  
certain causes will produce certain ef-  
fects : yet we see in the moral world  
varying effects often derived from an ap-  
parent similarity of causes. Infinite  
wisdom sees what effects in particular  
circumstances, and for particular, and  
wise, and good reasons ought to follow ;  
and those He directs to follow : and on  
this ground is founded the poet's reflec-  
tion, which has been abused to false  
and

and pernicious inferences, that “ what- SERMON  
“ ever is, is right.” That is, whatever III.  
event takes place, it is the result of cer-  
tain secret causes ; wisely modified and  
directed by the Almighty Governor of  
the world, so as to be the best result  
that could happen from the causes that  
produced it.

Our eyes discover to us nothing, and from reflection we know little, of the secret springs, by which the occurrences of this life are moved. In asserting the particular dispensations of providence ; we do not preclude their aspect to other objects and effects, than the simple one we particularly note. On the contrary, we may with good reason conclude, that all the dispensations of providence are so conducted, as to have a further influence ; than in any particular instance, and on the single individual, to which they may appear to us to be principally directed. We may suppose each, like a link in the vast chain of nature’s moral course,

to

**SERMON** to have respect to the great whole. For  
III. who can say, that the Author of nature  
cannot so manage both the natural, and  
moral course of things ; as to make the  
blessings and corrections, He shall will  
to individuals, harmonise with His gene-  
ral laws. And if no good reason can be  
produced in proof that He cannot do it,  
that is, if such act imply no contradic-  
tion ; we may justly conclude He does it :  
because such operation enlarges our ideas  
of His power, wisdom, and goodness ;  
of which the utmost reach of imagina-  
tion will not enable us to think suffi-  
ciently high. Every day's experience in-  
forms us of escapes from dangers, deli-  
verances from distress, the detection of  
secret sins so unexpected, so unassigna-  
ble to any known cause, that we attri-  
bute them to the immediate interposi-  
tion and interference of God : who must  
see and observe them, because He is  
always every where ; and whose ener-  
getic power, unsustained by which the  
course of nature would fail, what He  
sees

fees and observes, must direct and govern too.

SERMON

III.

When men speak of the general laws of nature; they can only understand those general causes and effects, with which they are acquainted. Those, we are not to suppose, God will upon every light occasion suspend, or alter. But are there not, may there not be, hidden causes, which we cannot see; by which providence acts in his particular dispensations? Such in the moral world there must be. For the progress and direction of the passions are in different men combined with such a variety of adventitious circumstances; as seem to require from providence different degrees of encouragement, assistance, and correction: such different degrees, as cannot depend upon any general system, or course of things predetermined by God; and therefore infer the necessity of particular dispensations. And the moral course of things, so disposed and attempered, pro-

F duces

SERMON duces that general harmony, which is  
III. experienced, and easily reconciled, by  
the admission of an interfering and inter-  
posing providence; every where and al-  
ways present as He is, noting all things  
as He does, and universally energetic as  
our best conceptions of His nature re-  
present Him.

In short to discard the belief of a par-  
cicular providence, is the next step to  
throwing aside the belief of any provi-  
dence whatever: for it must be almost  
immaterial to individuals, whether there  
be any providence, or not; if every thing  
be governed by predetermined laws.  
On such a supposition, where is the as-  
sistance, to which patient merit may ap-  
ply? If one uniform tenor, without re-  
spect to particular persons, and particular  
cases, prevail in the operations of na-  
ture; distress has no where to look for  
comfort, the workings of the pious heart  
in prayer are inefficacious and vain.

Hence

Hence then it appears, that the denial <sup>SERMON</sup>  
of such a power to providence, in itself  
the height of presumption, leads to the  
lowest depths of desperation. For how  
must it mortify a thinking mind, for a  
moment to imagine ; that the Almighty,  
after having created the universe, and  
ordained laws for its general government,  
satisfied with having furnished it with  
inhabitants, and provided for their com-  
mon support, sent them to succeed each  
other on this great stage ; exposed to  
innumerable evils, which it is not in their  
power to shun ; and deprived of the pro-  
tection of that Being, who alone is able  
to shield us from them, or, what is more  
desireable, to convert them to our ad-  
vantage. At that moment we cease to  
be encouraged with the lively hopes,  
that in our endeavours, if we deserve the  
Divine assistance, we shall enjoy it ; in  
our dangers, if we merit deliverance, it  
will be providentially youchsafed us ; in  
distress, if virtue arm us, God will make  
the angry shaft of adversity, “ Telum

F 2            “ imbelli

SERMON "imbelli sine ictu," fall harmless at  
III. our feet.

What hath been offered, establishing, as I have endeavoured to do, the doctrine of a Providence, particular as well as general, inculcates by practical consequence the Christian fortitude of trust. If the world be of God's creation, what He created with power, He must govern with exactness: and therefore we may rest assured, there must be a meaning in the permission, a propriety in the tendency of every event. On this persuasion let us repose with submissive and patient trust, that whatever incidents of affliction or surprise occur; they are founded in design, and their end is expedient. An unerring super-intendant ordains, an all-pervading eye observes, and omni-present power directs them. To that adorable power let us look up; assured, that though in this mixt state of things evil be unavoidable, that evil, God can and does attemper with appendages

dages of good, supplied by secret means; SERMON  
those means conducted, with infinite III.  
wisdom and design, with every possible  
attention to the deserving.

## SERMON IV.

Psalm xcv. 6.

*O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker: for He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture.*

**SERMON** **IV.** **I**N evidence, that the world was originally made by a Being infinite in wisdom and power; and that a power, no less perfect than that which made the world, directs, governs and upholds it in that harmony and regularity, which is so conspicuous through the whole range of created beings; the arguments adduced have, I trust, been found to approach very near to demonstration: as a truth deducible from these doctrines, **my**

my next subject of enquiry is the obli- SERMON  
gation of religious worship. IV.

And in this investigation my design is first to consider at large the general proposition.

Secondly, to examine the principle, that lifts up the pious heart to Heaven in prayer.

And in the third and last place to evince the close connection, that God Almighty hath ordained between religion and the social duties: so close, that without the former, civil society could not subsist.

I. First, then as to the general obligation of religion. A capacity to discover that there is a God, who made and preserves us: and that we are not able to do the one or the other of ourselves, indispensably requires us to love, honour, and serve that Maker and Preserver in every instance

F 4 and

SERMON and action of our lives. For as long as  
IV. we regard existence as a blessing ; so  
long do we acknowledge ourselves in-  
debted to the giver and preserver of life.  
Now as we are able to infer an obliga-  
tion for a benefit received ; such suffi-  
ciency of knowledge in us, in regard to  
the benefits, we have from our great  
Creator received, is of itself a true and  
proper foundation for religious worship :  
and every creature capable of making  
such an inference, as every reasonable  
creature is, becomes therefore subjected  
to the duty of gratitude ; and from a  
conscious sense of gratitude to God flow  
the duties of religion. Thus conclusive  
is natural reason, in proving the neces-  
sity of religious worship among all be-  
ings, who possess a degree of intelligence  
equal to that of man.

And experience confirms that in fact,  
the propriety of which reason evidences  
to us in theory. For among all nations,  
be their notions more or less refined, re-  
ligious

ligious worship prevails. The most bar- SERMON  
barous and uncivilised nations, as well IV.  
antient as modern, if their state be  
thoroughly enquired into, we shall find  
had a religion, though sometimes a very  
depraved one ; and offered up prayers,  
and made adorations, though the object  
of them has been a serpent, or a calf.  
Even the wretched barbarians, in the  
South Seas, whom the late discoveries  
of modern travellers have made known  
to us, though some of them almost  
without clothes, or houses, were none  
of them observed to be without their  
God.

From a practice so universal it ap-  
pears, that God has stamped an image of  
Himself on the human mind so deeply,  
that the greatest corruption of mankind  
has not been able entirely to erase it ;  
that He has naturally inculcated the me-  
thod of acknowledging Him the supreme  
cause of all things by prayer and adora-  
tion so strongly, as the lowest deprava-  
tion

**SERMON** <sup>IV.</sup> **tion** of manners cannot absolutely abolish. And hence we may infer, that religion is a reasonable service, and a duty absolutely required of us: or why did God, who made us, and never acts in vain, imprint such a notion on the human mind; if it be a matter of no consequence, and calculated for no use. But is it a matter of no consequence, to offer up our tribute of praise to that great fountain of goodness, from whom all our blessings flow? Is it a matter of no consequence, to ascribe to Him the honour due unto His name: to pay just homage to Almighty God, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings? Or, is it not rather natural to conceive, that the infinitely great Creator of all things, when in such manifestation of His adorable perfections He designed the general happiness, also involved in it a display of his own glory: willing that they should be acknowledged and reverenced, loved and praised by intelligent creatures? And such acknowledgment accordingly becomes

becomes a natural duty, and has the first moral claim to universal observance. For as honour in general is the homage paid to conspicuous excellencies, and especially to beneficent virtues : so religion, which is the highest honour, is appropriately due to God ; the most absolute Being in all perfections, and our sovereign Benefactor.

SERMON  
IV.

Our homage can not indeed add to the greatness of the Almighty : it can contribute nothing to His glory. He also knows our necessities without our information ; He knows what we have need of, before we ask ; and how to impart to us good things, better than we to ask them : so great are our ideas of the majesty of an all-wise Almighty God. Yet to refuse that homage, would be a sinful omission in us : as it is a constant acknowledgment of the existence of a God, a continual memorial to us of our own littleness and dependence, and of His transcendent greatness and superintending

SERMON superintending providence. We offer  
IV. praifes and thanksgiving to God for His  
mercies daily and hourly reached out to  
us; not that He can receive any addi-  
tional honour from the praifes, that dust  
and ashes can bestow; but to make such  
display of His honour and glory, as ra-  
tional creatures are enabled to proclaim;  
to testify a grateful sense of His mercies  
reached out to us, and our own inability  
to render more: as a proof that we feel  
those mercies, and exercise the faculties,  
He hath conferred on us, in a becoming  
manner, and according to their proper  
use. We implore His protection in  
dangers, His deliverance out of afflictions,  
and His support against the force of  
temptations, not that we suppose Him  
ignorant of our weaknesses or our wants:  
but in pious attestation of our entire  
dependence on Him for every evil we  
avoid, and for every good we in this life  
enjoy; as a pledge of our belief in His  
omnipotence, of our reliance on His mer-  
cies, our resignation to the dispensations  
of

of His providence : and in testimony of SERMON  
a full assurance of His provident concern IV.  
for His whole creation.

Thus general is the sense of religion : and so universal the observance of it. And thus clearly doth it press on us, as an indispensable duty. The object of religious worship, it is acknowledged, is not always the same ; nor even the principle of it : some worship the sun, and some a crocodile ; some a good being, and some a bad one ; some through love, and some through fear. Yet such variety proves nothing against the general truth of religion, and the consequent obligation to observe it. On the contrary, like counterfeit coins, it tends to prove one of real value ; of value to be counterfeited. And if there be one religion, which shines with more extraordinary characters of truth, than the rest ; it forms a subject, of every thing on this side the grave most worthy of serious investigation :

SERMON <sup>IV.</sup> vestigation: for without religion we are  
not men.

Reason indeed is generally supposed to be the distinguishing mark or characteristic of human nature: but perhaps religion is a much better. Reason, brutes have in common with mankind, and some brutes a considerable degree of it: or at least they possess something so much like reason, that it is difficult to draw the line of distinction between them. But no traits of religion do we discover in any of them. Religion, the knowledge and service of God, is the prerogative of man: it is the most reasonable and honourable employment, of which human nature is capable: it leads to an intercourse with God himself; which, while mankind acknowledge a God supreme, if they would acknowledge Him to any good purpose, the voice of reason and the impulse of nature, excite them to cultivate by acts of adoration and prayer.

II. This

II. This subject of prayer hath exercised the pens both of poets and philosophers in the the heathen world. And amongst the inspired writers the prince and poet of Israel is most frequent in his exhortations to it : and his expressions always mark the fervour of an interested heart. " O Thou, that hearest prayer, says he' ; to thee shall all flesh come." It is indeed a duty so universal ; that all mankind with an unforced assent agree in the observance of it. Let us then, as was proposed in the second place, with some minuteness enter into the principle of a duty, that in every age and country hath obtained so universal observance.

In the common intercourse of life between man and man, between superiors and inferiors, it will often happen that favours are conferred; which those, on whom they are conferred, have not ability to repay. Yet some return the common principles of justice require, and prompt the person who receives them

~~SERMON~~ them to make. What return then shall  
IV. extreme impotence render ; and the be-  
nefactor's knowledge of that impotence  
demand ? What, but the tribute of a  
grateful mind. The same reasoning will  
apply to the Deity ; only in an infinitely  
higher degree : as infinitely higher, as  
the blessings of creation and preservation  
are above those accidental enjoyments,  
that depend on them. And such affec-  
tion of the mind, as mankind feels for  
those inestimable blessings, naturally pro-  
duces that glow of gratitude ; which the  
enraptured heart pours out in the effu-  
sions of pious praise. Hence is deduc-  
ible the duty of prayer : which resting  
on the doctrine of a particular provi-  
dence, that doctrine in my last discourse  
I particularly applied myself to establish :  
intending, under the present article of  
enquiry, a more particular discussion of  
the duty resulting from it.

Man feels a chearless wants, which  
he cannot of himself supply ; he foresees  
danger,

dangers, which he knows not how to shun ; he finds himself involved in difficulties, from which he perceives all human art and power incompetent to relieve him. In this emergency, nature, that in indelible characters hath graven the existence of God on the human heart, teaches him likewise the use of that innate knowledge, by secret admonitions to invoke his Creator's aid. If the former notion be natural to the human mind, and what is universal must be so ; the latter, which is only the application of the former, must be so too. Those prayers, suggested by the impulse of nature in short ejaculations, the exercise of reason afterward matured into form, with length and expressive solemnity : and, from the use of private votaries, they became extended to public assemblies. And such public celebration of divine worship, more or less simple, as the respective people are more or less civilised, or rude, hath extended as far as the empire of reason prevails.

G

Now

SERMON  
IV.

Now this duty of prayer, so natural to the human mind, and by communities so universally practised, is supported on the reality of a particular providence. For if at the time, the world was made, the laws of nature were given; general, invariable laws, which nature was bound to pursue; the Deity enthroned in majesty sublime, aloof as it were from his own works, or at most an unactive spectator of them, never interposing his power through second causes, to divert evil, to inflict correction, to save and to destroy; on what ground should we address the throne of heaven, for protection in time of danger, for support amidst temptations, or in times of distress for deliverance out of trouble: subjects, which, while we live in the world, must form a part of our daily prayers? The world under such circumstances of general government, where would be the use of prayer? And without the use, how shall we account for the apparent universality of it? On supposition that every

every distribution of good and evil, of ~~SERMON~~ IV.  
happiness and misery, is irreversibly or-  
dained to take place in this life, according  
to certain general laws imposed on nature,  
which in no instance whatever admit of  
any alteration in our favour : what futil-  
ity, what weakness, I had almost said  
what folly were it, to throw up any par-  
ticular petition to the Almighty for any  
occasional blessing, we may stand most in  
need of ; which, to our prayers, though  
ever so ardent and importunate, on the  
supposed exclusion of a particular provi-  
dence, we know will not, cannot be  
granted.

Such uncomfortable consequences as  
these, the admission of a providence act-  
ing every where, and, if it act any  
where, it must act every where, pervading  
every minutest particle in nature, ever no-  
ting and directing every movement of the  
moral world, effectually precludes. This  
important, exhilarating truth communi-  
cates encouragement to virtuous pursuits,

G 2 adds

issues with regard to good and evil, bears  
comfort to distress; and invests the sense  
of profligacy with a continual terror; to  
the menace of sickness and untimely, or the  
check of worldly fame.

And apart from the immediate blessings, prayer draws down on the relying votary, the practice of it is calculated to improve the mind in virtue; exalting human nature by communications with the Divine. It habituates us to look up to God, as the author of all good, insuffles the love of Him in our hearts, and imprints the consciousness of his perpetual presence on our minds: which is the most efficacious preservative against the admittance of impure thoughts, and the perpetration of flagitious actions. Thus to contemplate the Deity, and hold communion with him in the manner reason directs, is using our intellectual faculties, as to the highest reach, so to the truest purpose of them. It would be difficult to assign any other good, pointedly

tedly and essentially good, use of them ; SERMON  
and it is impossible to assign a better. IV.  
~~~~~

III. To support the arguments already offered in proof of the obligation of religion on all beings possest of intellectual powers equal to those of man ; I proceed in the third and last place to observe the connection, that God Almighty hath ordained between the acknowledgment of Him, expressed in the duties of religion ; and the good order of society, and comforts of life from thence resulting, the practice of the social and relative duties.

Of this truth the proof must rest chiefly on historical representation : and to this we may appeal in evidence, that where there has been found little sense of God and religion, or where the notions of religion have been greatly debased and corrupted ; there the manners of the people have been most savage and brutish. On the contrary, where the justest and most lively sense of a Deity

SERMON and providence prevailed ; there the **IV.** social and relative virtues have most flourished, the most worthy and generous actions have been performed, and the manners have been ever the most humane and civilised. This is so clear and acknowledged a truth, and so forcibly struck a great Heathen, that “ if piety towards God were removed, he declares it his opinion, that there would be an end of all fidelity, of the bonds of all human society, and even of justice itself, the sum and compre- hension of all moral virtues.”* The reflection is worthy of a Christian philosopher ; and, the question properly stated, the soundest divinity would with the great Roman decide on it.

The question is not, whether a particular thoughtful speculatist may not see

* Atque haud scio an, pietate adversus Deos sublata, fides etiam, et societas humani generis, et una excellentissima virtus iustitia, tollatur.

Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. 1.

the

the fitness of many moral actions, and perform them accordingly; without regard to any other consideration, without reflecting on a presiding, governing, remunerating, chastising power: though even on this restricted statement of the case, an impartial observer of human nature would not hesitate to declare in the negative. But the subject of enquiry is; whether, uninfluenced by the apprehension, of something distinct from this principle of mere fitness or congruity of actions to the nature of things, of some being, on whom the existence of things themselves, and consequently their natures, and the congruity of one to another, depend, the generality of men could ever possess such firm notions of good and evil, as would constitute a sufficient principle of restraint from the one, and impulse to the other. And this question is no sooner asked, than the answer follows: that most assuredly the love and dread of that SOMETHING, by whose power the things themselves exist, and

SERMON by whose will the congruity of them to
IV. one another was fixed, is that principle ;
which acting uniformly, and universally,
forcibly and clearly too, influences the
bulk of mankind by the powerful mo-
tives of hope and fear.

And the knowledge we have of the
human mind, derived from lessons of
experience, instructs us ; that without
such belief of a supreme intelligent Be-
ing, on whom the nature of things de-
pends, who has a power of exacting
from all free agents a conformity of
conduct to that law of nature, which He
has established, and will some way or
other take cognizance of them ; or, in a
shorter form of words, without religion,
such a law, as is supposed to arise mere-
ly from the fitness of things, would have
but very little influence. It would be
as insufficient and unimpressive to the
greatest part of mankind ; as a human
law, without a sanction annexed to it,
or

or the apprehension of a magistrate to SERMON
put it in execution. IV.

It is possible that some men may possess such social benevolence, and such generous sentiments of public good, as to be a law to themselves ; and at the same time be endowed with such distinguishing judgment and acuteness of mind, as may enable them clearly to see, and voluntarily to act, as the best human laws would direct them. But what is this to the bulk of mankind ? We are in the present argument to take human nature as it generally is, and to consider what sort of belief or persuasion has the most prevalent and universal influence over it : and if we do so, we shall find that the rejection of religion, and its leading principles, is inconsistent with a perfect morality on two accounts.

First, if there be no belief of a God, and His presiding power, nor any expectation from that invisible Being of future

SERMON future rewards and punishments, there
IV. cannot be in the conception of common
sense, any sufficient bond of morality
between man and man. And secondly,
if there be really a God, that has any
concern with us, or for us ; a compleat
morality must necessarily respect Him,
as well as our intercourse with one
another.

First, if indeed the actions of men
were directed by instinct, and by instinct
only, like the actions of brutes ; and had
no dependence on any invisible principle
in the mind ; morality would in that
case be nothing else than living accord-
ing to that natural instinct : nor would
any kind of faith or belief be necessary.
But this is not the morality of beings
endued with understanding, and freedom
of will ; nor is it what gives them such
consciousness of the merit or demerit of
their own actions, as is capable of rais-
ing pleasure or dissatisfaction within
themselves, on account of them. It is
a circum-

a circumstance or consideration of a SERMON
much higher nature, that acts thus : re-
quiring reason and reflection, and some
attention to things past and future, as
well as the present ; and supposing con-
sequently a belief of something invisible,
by which we are moved to a rational
course of acting. And such considera-
tion further implies a comparison of
actions with some antecedent rule or
law, for the observance or transgression
of which we inwardly judge ourselves
rewardable by, or accountable to, that
superior Being ; who is, by some
means we cannot comprehend, as con-
scious of what we do, as we are our-
selves. It is this principle ; which, as
in one point of view we have found it
move on stronger hinges, than moral
fitness and the congruity of things, is in
another that, which distinguishes reason
from mere instinct, ranks mankind above
the brute creation, and renders them
accountable beings.

Consider

SERMON
IV.

Consider secondly, the force of self-love: and that alone will be found of tendency sufficient to subvert the rectitude of moral actions; did they not depend on the acknowledgment of principles remote from sensation, and more powerful than mutual convenience. It is the secret sense we feel of an obligation to the steady performance of certain actions, founded on the belief of an intelligent legislator, who is also an inspector of our behaviour; which gives efficacious impulse to them. For define virtue in what manner we please; let it be the love of order, harmony, or proportion of mind; let it be a habit or temper of living agreeably to the perfection of nature, or of acting for the good of the whole human race, of which we are but a part; call it as we may, by whatever specious name: yet the question still recurs: who constituted this order of things: who first effected this harmony or proportion: or, who is the author of this course of things, which

we

we call the course of nature? for He **SERMON**
must be the ultimate legislator: and **IV.**
this law of nature, this rule of morality,
which we are taught to observe, must
be His will; directed by His supreme
authority; and must therefore in the first
instance respect Him.

Under such persuasion, it is his influ-
ential power, that actuates us in our de-
terminations, and the execution of them:
and not the order, fitness, and propriety
of the things themselves. Without the
powerful co-operation of this principle,
how weak would be the influence of mo-
ral considerations! If, by an act of private
injury, we could indulge a present grati-
fication; easily would the plea of self-in-
dulgence break through the cobweb tex-
ture of exact propriety: and weak would
be the voice of mutual convenience;
whenever self-interest interfered. It is
conscience alone, that can combat tem-
tations; and triumph over the strong
principle of self-love, in whatever shape it
may assault us. And conscience is solely
founded

SERMON founded on a consciousness of a supreme intelligent Being, the framer of those laws of morality ; and of our accountableness to Him for the breach of them. And naturally and closely united with our belief of such a divine existence is the opinion or persuasion, that this supreme Being is a witness of what we do even in our most secret recesses ; and considers our actions with favour or displeasure : for without this consideration, it would be difficult to conceive, how our own consciences should be affected with shame or satisfaction, not dependent on the estimation of the world, but entirely our own : a shame, though men applaud us, when we do ill ; and a satisfaction, though men censure us for worthy actions.

These effects of conscience imply a belief of the intimate and constant presence of one, whose favour or displeasure is more to be regarded, than any outward consideration. And it hence follows,

lows, that whatever opinion sets us loose from the restraint of conscience, will render our justice, fidelity, gratitude, and all other virtues respecting our fellow creatures very precarious: and that therefore an avowed disregard of religion, and its influence, must be necessarily destructive of that morality, which regards our intercourse with one another; and subversive of civil society.

SERMON
IV.

Such is the natural relation of religion to morality; of such importance to this is that, in force and use. What therefore God hath connected and joined together, not all the casuistry and device of man can put asunder. Morality cannot be compleat and perfect, without a discharge of what is due to, without a regulation of behaviour, suiting and becoming, every relation, in which we stand to every being; the duty we owe, rising in exigence proportionate to the excellence of the being, to whom we owe it. The first, the most distinguished, part of relative

SERMON relative duty therefore must be in proper
IV. acts of devout homage to that first and supreme Being; from whom we derive all that we possess, even the principle, that teaches us this duty, the power of reason itself: and those acts of homage constitute religion.

With such irresistible light doth reason illustrate the general obligation of religious duties. *Though heaven and earth pass away;* religion, whatever the weak and the vain may affect to think of it, is a service, that will continue for ever. It is the employment of superior beings; and will continue, when this perishable globe of ours shall be no more. There may be those, their time devoted to pleasure, or engaged by business, who affect surprise; that any should be found so weak, as to trouble themselves about its doctrines, or take a serious part in its pretensions. But if there be a God; religion is a serious thing. And if its pretensions be examined with becoming seriousness,

seriousness, and its merits without preju- SERMON
dice decided on ; we shall find, that to IV.
believe its doctrines, and to practice its
precepts aright, is the wisest thing, that
can engage a wise man's attention ; and
the noblest principle, that can influence
his conduct. Gratitude enjoins the obser-
vance of it as a duty ; and the object
renders it the first and great duty. Hope
warmly interests good men in its favour :
and just apprehension should teach all
men with reverence to regard it. The
wit and ingenuity of man may have been
employed against this, and that, and
every mode of religion ; which tends to
restrain the appetites and inclinations of
mankind. But we may defy the wit,
and ingenuity, and malice of human na-
ture, to produce a single argument ; in
disproof of the obligation of religion on
all beings, possess of a degree of intelli-
gence equal to that of man.

Knaves may detest, and fools deride,
the wise man will always revere, it. Cre-

H ating

SERMON ating satisfaction, it sanctions the en-
joyments of life: inspiring fortitude,
IV. it renders the evils of life supportable;
and opens the amplest prospect of fair
and reasonable hopes. Let us hold it
fast: to the fastidious sneer, and the ca-
lumnious cavil, let no false respect for
politeness, or even greatness itself, deter
us from giving *an answer*. And that we
may at all times, and on all occasions,
be ready with our best exertions to de-
fend its sacred truths, and to evince them
in our lives; May God of His infinite
mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

SERMON V.

Isaiah lix. 9.

*We wait for light ; but behold obscurity :
for brightness, but we walk in dark-
ness.*

THE prophet, in the beginning of SERMON
this chapter, exclaims against the vices ^{V.}
of his people ; and laments their deplo-
rable depravation of manners, immersed
as they were in the darkness of igno-
rance and sin. Thence stretching for-
ward his anxious eye to the expected
coming of the Messiah, destined to re-
move the cloud that veiled their under-
standing, we wait, says he, *for light, but*
still behold obscurity ; expectant of bright-
ness, we continue to walk in the devious

SERMON path of error and sin. At length, his
V. mind as it were exulting in a full prospect
of that day, when *the sun of righteousness*
shall arise, and the redeemer appear in Zion ;
in the spirit of prophecy he pronounces,
that the extended world from east to
west shall acknowledge his sway. *So*
shall they fear, says he, *the name of the*
Lord from the west, and his glory from the
rising of the sun : when the enemy shall come
up like a flood ; the spirit of the Lord shall
set up a standard against him. And the re-
deemer shall come to Sion ; and unto them
that turn from transgression in Jacob.

Something, similar to this reflection of the prophet, strikes us in the second Alcibiades of Plato : in which Socrates informs his disciple, that they were to wait for a teacher, who would instruct them more perfectly in the duties of religion. This remarkable passage has

by an elegant writer * of our own nation

* Mr. Addison.

been

been made the subject of criticism: and **SERMON**
other commentators have concurred with
him, in supposing it to bear some allu-
sion to that *life and immortality*, which
Jesus Christ afterwards *brought to light*
through his gospel. Be that as it may;
considering the obscurity and perplexity,
with which the philosopher expresses
himself on the subject of prayer, I think
it clearly inferrible from thence, that he
conceived the light of nature, or the bare
apprehension of reason, insufficient to
direct mankind fully and satisfactorily in
that great important duty: so great and
important in that wise heathen's opinion,
as to require more information than the
world at that time possessed.

• In accommodation to minds of a certain complexion, on which the authority of an eminent heathen, I know not by what kind of perverseness, has more weight than that of writers, whom we justly stile DIVINE; of the passage, to which I have above alluded, I will

SERMON ^{V.} take occasion to enter into a more minute discussion. Αναγκαῖον οὖν εῖται περιμένειν, εἰς τις μάθην τις δὲ πρὸς Θεούς καὶ πρὸς αὐθίμους διακεισθαι. * Socrates must from hence either mean to insinuate ; that we were to wait for the future appearance of a person, to instruct mankind in the duty of religion, of more general knowledge, higher natural abilities, and greater reach of understanding, than himself, or any one, who had appeared before him, possessed : or, that we must wait for some person, who should for that purpose be by God particularly delegated.

In respect to his own natural abilities, and reach of understanding ; it is pretty clear, our philosopher did not think very meanly of himself. Many of his contemporaries objected to him the charge of vanity : and one in particular termed him, “ of the few good men, the best ;

* Wherefore we must be forced to wait till some one shall instruct us, how we ought to conduct ourselves towards the Gods and men.

“ and

“ and of many vain ones, the vain- SERMON
 “ est.” * Notwithstanding the affected V.
 humility of that celebrated acknowledg- —
 ment, “ that all he knew, was, that he
 “ knew nothing :” confident as he ever
 appeared in the rectitude of his own opi-
 nions, and obstinate in maintaining them,
 he certainly entertained no contemptible
 notion of his own superior wisdom.
 And the ignorance he confessed, seems
 only to have been a trap to gain ap-
 plause : or at most it was no other than
 an ignorance of particular subjects, of
 that physical knowledge, of which the
 philosophers used to boast themselves ;
 such as the nature of the Gods, the
 principles of things, &c. And accord-
 ingly the consequence, that the sophists,
 or philosophers, assumed from their af-
 fected science in those studies, he deriso-
 rily contrasted by an avowed ignorance
 of them : quitted those vain, unsatisfac-

* Σωκράτες αὐτῶν βελτιστ' ολιγων, πολλων δε
 παραισταθ' —

sermon ^{V.} tory subjects of investigation, and confined his philosophical disquisitions to ethics.

Competent as he was to judge of the powers of the human mind, and reasoning from analogy, he could have little ground to expect, or even hope ; that the bare strength of unassisted reason would in any individual ever reach that perfection of knowledge, which should be able to investigate the nature of God, and to ascertain the duties of man from such investigation resulting. He saw, what human reason from such researches had effected ; and from thence judged, what it could do. We must therefore conclude, that he did not expect a man of that very superiour reach of understanding ; which should be able, from the natural powers of human reason, to set mankind aright in their knowledge of God, and the immediate duties that relate to Him.

What then did he expect, what did he teach his disciple to look for ? Plainly

ly for a person endowed with powers ^{SERMON} V. of mind, enlarged beyond the ordinary stretch of human capacity ; and delegated to the office of instructing mankind in their immediate duty to God. And as such qualification of course involved a more perfect knowledge of the Deity, than philosophy had ever taught ; so likewise did it imply a more perfect practice of the duties immediately flowing from our relation to Him, than mankind had before been accustomed to observe. And such designation, and such knowledge, charactered a person charged with a divine revelation.

I do not call to my assistance in this argument the foreknowledge of events, to which this philosopher occasionally made pretensions ; and suppose his observation, on the reasonable expectation of a future instructor, a prophecy. I press it no further than in proof, that the wise heathen was convinced of the necessity of a revelation : and we may be

SERMON be bold to set the opinion of the man,
V. whom antiquity proclaimed the wisest
of mankind, against all that the philosophic pride of this, or any other age,
hath said or written against it. And
such the opinion of Socrates, is very reconcileable with the general notions of
prophecies, miracles, and mysteries; to
which all nations have occasionally pre-
tended, and attributed them to the opera-
tion of their Gods: and therefore is
liable to no objection, on account of the
supposed singularity of it.

From this eminent character of antiquity, let us descend to one of more modern date: from whom I have to offer an argument, though of a different nature, in point and purpose the same: I mean the learned and able author of the "Religion of Nature delineated." It is an argument, his own labours supply; and his own acknowledgment supports it. "Here," says that able writer, speaking of the immortality of the soul, 'I be-
gin

“ gin to be very sensible, how much I ~~SERMON~~
“ want a guide. But as the religion of ~~SERMON~~
“ nature is my theme, I must at pre-
“ sent content myself with that light,
“ which nature affords.”* And in-
deed the necessity of such a guide, as he
alludes to, his laborious investigation of
the subject, on which he writes, abun-
dantly evinces. For if a knowledge of
the divine nature, and man’s duty to God
from thence resulting, were necessary to
human happiness ; and such a course of
argument, as he pursues, were the only
means natural reason pointed out for at-
taining to it : so few are capable of be-
ing instructed by so abstruse a method,
as renders evident the further want of
some more compendious, clear, and rea-
dy means of communicating it ; and
demonstrates, that a revelation was ne-
cessary for the general instruction of
mankind.

* Wollaston’s Relig. of Nat. sect. 9.

SERMON On the nature of the Deity, the present state of man, and the duties incumbent on him, as deduced from the principles of cultivated reason, perhaps no writer ever thought so well, or so satisfactorily addressed himself to the understanding, as Wollaston. But why hath he, or many other moderns that might be cited, thought and written of the religion of nature so much better, than the antients have done: except that they had a light, which those wanted; the light, that christianity hath holden out to them: with which many have emblazed their idol, reason; overlooking, like the votaries of the moon, the great source from whence all its light is derived? Look into the writings of the antients, and see how far their abilities in every branch of literature, that doth not depend on experiments, mock the feeble efforts of later ages to excel, or rival them; and then let those, who can, produce a reason, why the moderns have written so much

much better on the subjects of morality ^{SERMON} and religion, than the antients have ^{V.} done, except the reason I have assigned.

In my former discourses, I endeavoured to evince the creative, and preserving power of God; and to deduce from thence, the obligation of religion on all beings possessing intellectual faculties in a degree equal to that of man. The short question now before us is, whether the light of natural reason be sufficient to instruct us in the duties of religion; or a more express revelation of God's will in those particulars be necessary.

And in this discussion, our first object of enquiry will be, how far, on a full and fair investigation of the powers of reason, uncultivated by science, and common to mankind, they are calculated to lead us to that perfect knowledge of God; which is necessary to produce a corresponding knowledge of the duties we

SERMON we owe Him ; such a firm undoubting
V.
knowledge, as shall have a proper influence
on our practice.

I propose in the second place, to confirm the result of such enquiry ; by evincing from facts and experience, how far unassisted reason hath gone in promoting divine knowledge, and religious practice, among the characters most reputed for wisdom in the heathen world.

And in conclusion, we shall thirdly find it, from those enquiries, follow ; that the best and purest system of religion, which unassisted reason can frame, will be defective in perspicuity, efficacy, and universality.

I. For the more clear elucidation of the argument I am now pursuing, it may be necessary to explain the terms. By the religion attainable by the powers of reason, is understood natural religion : a term used in distinction from revelation.

revelation. And by NATURAL RELIGION SERMON
I consequently understand, not a sense
of religious duty stamped upon the hu-
man mind, and judging with innate dis-
crimination of right and wrong: for, in
this acceptation of the terms, the sense of
religious duty would be general and uni-
form, however the practice was. But
the terms, in my conception of them,
denote an obligation of duty, arising
from our relation to our Creator, to
which the mind is supposed to give an
unerring assent; thereto induced by a
natural aptitude, and congruity of our
ideas to the divine nature and attributes.
And thus considered, the mind must per-
fectly comprehend the nature of the ob-
ject, and ground of that relation, from
whence those duties flow.

In what degree of perfection the mind
might originally have come out of the
hands of its Creator, how clear in its
decisions of right and wrong, how com-
petent to judge of moral relations, to
fway

SERMON sway, and direct, our actions ; while
V. conscience assisted as a faithful monitor,
unbiased by prejudice, not warped by
bad example ; is a matter of too much
disputation, thereon to build an argu-
ment. With whatever readiness of mind
I may assent to the doctrine of primæval
perfection ; * I mean not to argue from
it, as a fact. We are to consider the
powers of the human mind as we now
find them, and as known experience
from history represents them.

From the creative and preserving
power of God, it has been already proved,
that all religious duties flow : the mind
therefore must be perfectly clear in its
conception of those truths, in order per-
fectly to ascertain the duties that result
from them. How far competent natu-
ral reason, that is, reason in its unculti-
vated, unimproved state, reason operating

* *Vid. Credo de Sacra Promissione.*

on the mind in the mass of mankind, is SERMON
to the discovery and comprehension of ^{V.} those two great and fundamental truths,
on which hinge all the duties of religion ; the train of reasoning already used
on those subjects will clearly evince.
And while it is demonstrable, that without a full, and clear, and comprehensive
knowledge of those fundamental doctrines, it is impossible to know the duties
that result from them : it will follow, that a shorter, and easier method
of inculcating the knowledge of those doctrines, is necessary to a general com-
prehension of the duties so resulting ; as a clear comprehension of the duties, is
necessary to the practice of them.

With regard to the existence of the Deity, I would not have it understood, as from hence collected ; that this momentous doctrine, the foundation of all religion, is absolutely undiscoverable by human reason : conscious as I am of the rational evidence, by which it may be
I demonstrated

SERMON ^{V.} demonstrated. But the general prevalence of aslent to this great truth, in all ages of the world, hath, I conceive, been rather owing to an innate idea of such an existence, than a conviction of it by reason and argument. It may with certainty be affirmed, that the common capacity of mankind, is not capable of making this discovery by the mere force of reason : because it is only to be made in the use of such abstracted ideas, and such abstruse reasoning and manner of deduction, as is far beyond the reach and powers of mind, observable in the generality of men. And it would be unnecessary to repeat the arguments, that have been already produced in proof of that doctrine ; or to offer such others, as might be proposed ; to evince, that the plainest arguments of conviction, of which the nature of the subject is capable, it is above the level of an ordinary capacity, to frame, or even to comprehend the process and force of them.

The

The same conclusion is equally in proof, respecting the governing and presiding power of the Deity. Yet it must also, in regard to this doctrine, be acknowledged ; that there are topics in great variety, which, if properly attended to, and by the inquisitive and cultivated mind pursued, afford ample conviction of the reality of a divine providence. And the evidence, which such arguments carry with them, has obtained the assent of the wisest, the most learned, and the best men ; among those, who possessed not the advantages of revelation. But they are not arguments, that can be pursued by the generality of mankind : they are not so obvious, so short, and clear ; as to stamp that conviction on the rude, unlettered, vulgar mind ; which vulgar minds require. The difficulties of reducing the proof of this great truth to any demonstrative and scientific evidence are such, as not only exceed the utmost reach of capacity in the illiterate multitude ; but such, as

SERMON lie not very level to those even of penetration and learning, who may not have accustomed themselves to investigations and studies of that kind.

Under such disadvantages, well might the gross of mankind, whole countries, run into wild idolatries and vain conceits : trembling under ideal apprehensions of evil, and mistaking the fountain of all good. Hence prostrations that degraded, and pollutions that depraved human nature : hence the libidinous rites instituted in honour of the Gods, whose nature and whose pleasures their grovling votaries held of a piece with their own : and hence the practisers of every vice were taught to justify their conduct by the example of some of their Gods : hence the blind dread of offended powers, and altars stained with human blood, to avert the effects of divine displeasure : and hence, in fine, the veriest works of Hell, done under a blind pretence of pleasing Heaven.

Indeed

Indeed what better effect could mere, ^{SERMON}
unassisted, human reason have been ex-
pected to produce in the world : indeci-
sive and unsatisfactory as its powers have,
on the most accurate investigation of
them, been found ; when employed on
those elevated subjects, the nature of
the Deity, and the duties of man result-
ing from his relation to Him ? Nor is
such light incompetent to direct the
mass of mankind only, the ignorant and
vulgar, in their duty to the Deity ; but
even the wise and learned, who had no
better guide, those who had made the
acquisition of knowledge the business of
their lives ; even those men we shall
find confirming the result of the prece-
ding enquiry : as I proposed in the se-
cond place to exemplify, and from facts
and experience to evince, how far they
in their respective ages went, in promo-
ting divine knowledge, and religious
practice.

II. The first great authority I will
cite, was Anaxagoras ; who appears to

I 3 have

SERMON ^{V.} have been the first materialist on record in the world. He supposed matter to have been self-existent, a rude chaotic mass: from whence he raises a sublimated principle, which he styles Intelligence, who fought this stubborn mass; and the issue of the conflict was the fair frame and order of things, which we behold. From such an idea of the Supreme Being, we may expect a consistent notion of the duties of religion. And so it was: as may be collected from his answer to a very important question, and much to the purpose of our present investigation. The question was, "for what purpose man was created?" and our wise man's answer was, "to contemplate the Sun, Moon, and Heavens." Vain, futile philosopher! And is this the vast extent, to which reason will soar? Ask the poor unlettered disciple of Christ the question; and he will return a very different answer. He will tell thee, man was made, to proclaim his great Creator's praise; with

with heart-felt raptures to adore that ~~power~~ SERMON
power and goodness, which called him ~~into~~ V.
into existence ; to endeavour in his proper station, by an interested discharge of the social and relative duties, to contribute to the general happiness of the creation, to watch and to subdue each irregular start of passion, to purify and fit the foul for a state of higher blifs.

Examine the notions of Aristippus, and the Cyrenaic sect, concerning the Deity : and what do they tend to inculcate ; but principles of Atheism, and polytheistic practice : an accommodating creed, without any influence on our life and actions : no conception of benefits received from God, nor of duties on the part of man exacted in acknowledgment of them. They had no general line of conduct : but each was ready with quaint apothegms * to defend

* Habeo Laida ; non habeor a Laide.

Vid. Cic. in Epist. et 2. de Fin.

SERMON V. the practices, to which inclination respectively led him. Each was a law unto himself ; gluttonous, licentious, ostentatious or mean, as they felt themselves individually by humour, habit, and disposition addicted.

Aristotle, than whom the schools of philosophy never boasted a more nice enquirer into the nature of things, acknowledged indeed the immateriality of the Divine Being, and his providence too ; but limited that providence to the charge of the cœlestial bodies, which he supposed by sympathy to influence and direct the course of the world, we inhabit : an idea this, which removes the Deity at a distance from us ; and is therefore a principle ill-calculated, whereon to ground religious duties. *

Plato caught a glimmering of light from the father of moral philosophy.

* Vid. Diog. Laert. Vit. Philosoph.

He assigned the direction of human affairs immediately to the care of the Gods : and seemed to have a more adequate conception of the nature of the Deity, of the human mind, and other truths connected with those sublime subjects, even than the inquisitive Aristotle himself. But he had travelled into Ægypt in quest of knowledge : might there have gleaned some scattered fragments of traditional truths, which the Jews in their long commoration in that country had left behind them ; and derived the superiour illumination of his mind from a stronger light, than unassisted reason affords.

What shall we say of Socrates ? That he conceived an idea of the unity of the Deity : whom he insulted by a weak adherence to a ridiculous system of polytheism.

I will not rake farther into the follies and extravagances of a number of other sages ;

SERMON sages; who took upon them the arduous
V. task of instructing mankind in the know-
ledge of God, the nature of the human
mind, and the duties of life from the
relation of man to his creator arising.
The preceding reflections will sufficient-
ly evince this resulting truth: that the
natural powers of the uninformed mind
are not competent to that clear compre-
hension of God and providence; which
is necessary to establish such conviction,
as shall produce amongst mankind a
uniform and consistent practice of religi-
ous duties.

This has been proved on the incon-
trovertible authority of fact and experi-
ence, in the varying and doubtful opini-
ons, not of the rude illiterate vulgar; nor
yet of chiefs and statesmen, whose
minds may have been supposed too much
engaged in scenes of active life, to have
allowed leisure for sober speculative pur-
suits; but of those learned and best-in-
formed characters, who had sacrificed
all

all worldly avocations to the study of ^{SERMON} wisdom, and made the acquisition of ^{V.} knowledge not only the chief, but the sole business of their lives.

III. But supposing the opinions of philosophic men to have been more uniform and consistent, than we have found them : still a religion deduced from them would want, as was observed in the third and last place, perspicuity, efficacy, and universality.

I. It must want perspicuity ; consisting, as it has been shewn, in a long train of abstract reasoning : which to different persons would appear more or less obvious, as individuals are more or less perspicacious, apprehensive, and acute. Those arguments likewise would be always liable to misconceptions and misconstruction ; and diffidence in opinion would produce diversity in practice. The fundamental truths of religion must be plain and clear : a direct declaration of facts,

SERMON facts, not supported by abstruse reasoning;
V. but by, what would constitute a much firmer foundation, a direct appeal to the senses in the performance of miracles. The doctrine, in this case proposed to be believed, is a plain assertion: and my assent is grounded on what I feel, or hear, or see. Thus, if our reason can comprehend, that facts may be as they are represented; if our senses be convinced, that they are so; this is all the satisfaction, the mind can require: and this is a conviction suited to every mind.

II. In respect to its efficacy, as the doctrines, on which such a religion rests, must consist of very disputable points, and doubtful disquisitions: they would not carry with them conviction strong enough to influence the practice of those, to whom they are addressed; scarcely of those, who themselves might propose them. They might believe them: but belief and conviction are very different principles,

principles, and will be found on practice ~~SERMON~~
to have very different effects. Else the ~~—~~
great heathen philosopher, above alluded
to, at the awful hour of dissolution,
when he was going to meet that ineffa-
bly great and glorious Existence, whom
his conception had figured to him as
the Creator and Preserver of Heaven and
Earth, would not have ventured to in-
sult Him with neglect ; and, in weak
and servile compliance with his coun-
try's silly superstitions, direct a sacrifice
to be offered to an imaginary individual
of a ridiculous polytheistic tribe. Would
a converted christian, under the same
circumstance of prejudice in favour of
his country's ceremonious rites, at such
awful period have been induced by any
consideration to trample on the cross of
Christ ? This is not a question of spe-
culation ; the affirmative of which on one
side is as good, as the negative on the
other : we can produce facts and expe-
rience in a hundred instances, to prove
he would not.

III. And

SERMON III. And lastly, such a religion must want universality: for it is a religion calculated not for the generality of mankind, but for a nation of philosophers. For those philosophers, were they ever so thoroughly persuaded of the truth of it themselves, could not explain it to the ignorant multitude: they could never bring those arduous doctrines of refined speculation to a level with rude uncultivated minds. And though, from the reputation of their wisdom and knowledge, they should possess sufficient influence with the vulgar, to obtain a tacit consent to the doctrines they taught: as they could propose them with no other force, than merely the weight of their own private opinions; they could be supposed to have little influence on the lives and morals of those, to whose inferior understandings they were addressed. Stooping with pliant minds to their opinions, some might believe; others would doubt; and, as such a religion must depend on deductions of reason,
others

others again would form different conclusions. Self-love and self-satisfaction, under the guidance of natural inclination, would individually communicate different appearances to doctrines of mere opinion: and scarcely one single point of duty would be received with such concurrent confidence and common assent; as to influence practice, against present interest, the sollicitation of pleasure, the indulgence of ease.

SERMON
V.

But if, after all that has been urged, we are still to be told, " that a wise and good God cannot impose on mankind any thing relating to religion, that may not be discovered by the human mind without the assistance of *foreign* instruction, or that is not immediately founded in the nature of things:"* having shewn, from the greatest authorities in the most polished parts of the ancient world, that the case is otherwise; that certain duties

* Christianity as old as the Creation.

SERMONS are required of mankind, founded on
such doctrines and relations, which natural
reason does not clearly make known: I
might ask, in turn, in what period of the
world it was generally otherwise; when
those characters existed, who, by the na-
tural powers of the mind, discovered the
doctrines and duties of pure religion?
And I know but one satisfactory reply
that could be made; which would be,
by confronting historical evidence with
history.

There is an ancient history, that in-
forms us of the principal state of man:
when he lived in perfect innocence and
happiness. Is this state indeed he must
have been possessed of a perfect know-
ledge of his duty, "without any foreign
introduction?" For without knowing it, he
could not perform it: without performing
it, he could not have been perfectly inno-
cent: and unless perfectly innocent, he
could not have been perfectly happy.
Thus exactly consonant with the testi-
ment,

ment, which from the lip of scepticism SERMON
I have just cited, do we find this very V.
antient history describe the primitive
state and condition of mankind. Agree-
able to it, God is represented as im-
posing on man no duty, of which he did
not know and comprehend the force.

The account of human nature and
human manners, which that history sup-
plies, informs us, that *though God created
man perfect, he had found out many devices.*
That is, that he possessed at his creation
powers of mind, competent to discern
what was right, and sufficient rectitude
of inclination to prompt him to pursue
it. But that, notwithstanding such com-
petence to know, and ability to perform,
his duty, he had deviated in his conduct
into many devices ; into positive acts of
disobedience : that a deterioration of his
nature succeeded ; that his understanding
became obscured, and a sense of right and
wrong less sensibly affected him. And,
consistent with this historical narrative,

K the

SERMON the proofs, that have been above offered,
V.
— extracted chiefly from the antient biographer* of those characters, whose learning and love of wisdom obtained to them the distinguished appellation of philosophers, abundantly evince; that in the deteriorated, depraved state of human nature, they were acquainted neither with the doctrines, nor duties, of pure religion.

In consideration of such experienced corruption, such deterioration of human nature, this volume proceeds to unfold the dispensations of Divine Providence; and explain those mysteries, that meet in the moral conduct of mankind. It instructs us, that to supply the defect in the natural light of reason, God promised, and according to his promise gave, mankind an additional light; or, to preferre the words of the author in the testaments quoted above, *a foreign*

* Diogenes Laertius.

instruction; * conveyed in so clear and explicit terms and manner, that nothing is wanting to the comprehension of it, but an eye that will see, and a heart disposed to understand.

SERMON
V.

I have mentioned this history, and this little abstract from it, only as the suggestion of an object worth investigating: as it may tend to reconcile to truth, and to explain the favourite opinion of those, who assert that God must have endowed man with natural powers of mind, sufficient to enable him to know His will, and to practise it. If the truth of it, as relating to a primæval state of perfection, be questioned; I might, in support of such doctrine, cite antient poets and philosophers, of most eminence in the heathen world, inculcating the same opinion †. If the presumed authority of that volume be treated with an affected air of ridicule; we may tell those

* See page 143.

† Vide Concilio de Statu Paradisiaco.

SERMON V.
who treat it thus, and it would surprize many, who take their shadowy religion on the credit of others, to be told ; that some of the ablest and most learned men, this country ever produced, have not only been private believers, but public defenders of the doctrinal truths, which that volume contains. And it would be equally mortifying on their part, to observe to them ; that the adversaries of revealed religion, in this country, have been generally men of very superficial learning ; such as have seldom waded into the depths of science, or contributed to the advancement of erudition and knowledge in any material article : contenting themselves, by an affectation of singularity, a love of cavil, and parade of words, with a cheaper purchase of fame. That by men of this description we may never suffer ourselves to be laughed out of our religion, out of our present comfort, and our future hopes, may God of His infinite mercy grant, &c.

S E R-

S E R M O N VI.

John iv. 2.

Salvation is of the Jews.

TO ascertain, how far natural reason was competent to discover the duties of pure religion, was the object of my last discourse: which, flowing from a just apprehension of the divine nature, and the relation in which we stand to the Supreme Being, must depend for their propriety and uniformity on the reach of our ideas, as directed to that sublime subject; and the equal extent of them. If they be inadequate to the subject, the duties will be imperfect; if they vary in individuals, larger and more comprehensive in some than others, the

SERMON
VI.

K 3

rule

K

SERMON rule of duty founded on them must be
VI vague and varying. And from the preceding investigation it was by proof and example evinced ; that not only the mass of mankind, but even the wise and learned, entertained very different notions of the divine nature, and had varying and very imperfect ideas of the relative duties of man to his Creator : that, from such discrepancy of opinion, no general rule of practice could be formed ; nor on the moral conduct of mankind could such imperfect knowledge, as they possessed, of God and religion, have sufficient influence.

Many of them conceived false and injurious notions of God : and the opinions even of those, who might be nearer the truth, were too much involved in doubts and obscurity, to be efficacious in gaining them to a strict and uniformly religious life ; much less in promoting the practice of religion among the multitude. Yet the creative and preserving

preserving goodness of God, it was inferred, * demand from beings endowed with a degree of reason, equal to that of man, a return of rational service ; or, in other words, the observance of religious duties. And to practise religion in purity and truth, we must understand its doctrines and commands. We must comprehend them clearly, we must be thoroughly convinced of the divine authority, that instituted and enjoined them : or they will have no efficacy on our lives. If therefore the light of nature be not competent to this effect ; God, who conferred that light on us, as he easily could, so we must conclude as readily would, confer on us a supplemental aid, some stronger and clearer light. How such supplemental aid may be conferred, we will next proceed to enquire.

He, who endowed the cultivated mind with sufficient powers, by long and la-

* See page 86, &c.

VI. **SERMON** borious operations of reason to learn to know Him, can no doubt as easily communicate to the mind such knowledge of Himself some shorter way, by immediate illumination ; a ray of intuitive knowledge, lighting to certain truths, to any truths, that are not above the natural grasp of that mind. For instance, the mind can conceive the idea of a first cause, infinitely active and powerful. This knowledge may be acquired, through the medium of a long chain of reasoning : or it may be communicated to that mind supernaturally and immediately. But to comprehend the manner of God's existence, exceeds the reach of human intelligence. This is a degree of knowledge, which cannot be acquired by any exertions of reason : nor can it be immediately and supernaturally communicated to the human mind. For to receive such degree of knowledge, the mind itself must be altered, its capacity enlarged, its nature changed : but change the nature of the mind,

mind, and you unmake the man. Hence ^{SERMON}
then we find no apparent difficulty in ^{VI.}
conceiving a supernatural communica-
tion of knowledge : and we also learn,
what kind and degree of knowledge
may be to the mind thus supernaturally
and instantaneously communicated ; viz.
any knowledge, which the mind by the
operation of reason is capable in a na-
tural way of acquiring. And the man
thus divinely illuminated is as capable
of communicating to others such illumi-
nation of knowledge, as he who may
have acquired it in the ordinary way :
and indeed with greater weight ; for he
feels it, and communicates it as a divine
impression, and therefore an incontro-
vertible truth.

But the mere belief of internal illumina-
tions, is no proof that we possess
them : for those fancied feelings, that
are boasted by many of weak heads and
warm imaginations, are as impressive as
real ones ; we may be deceived by them
ourselves,

SERMON ourselves, and thereby led to deceive others. There is need therefore of some external proof of the truth and reality of our pretensions : and no surer or more satisfactory one can be conceived, than the performance of acts, which exceed the ordinary powers of nature. They are direct appeals to the senses ; and when the experience of internal illuminations is attended with such characters of external evidence ; it acts with all the force of conviction truth can give, and has a claim to rational assent. Indeed it is capable of proof, that internal illuminations cannot exist, unattended with some external character of authenticity. For whom would the person, who could produce no other proofs of the reality of his mental illuminations, than his own feelings, convince ? And without the power of convincing others, what would be the use of such illuminations ? And without a use, or purpose, and a good one too, it is hard to conceive that God, who does nothing in vain,

vain, should distinguish any individual SERMON
with such supernatural gifts and powers. VI.

The possibility of divine illuminations being thus evinced, and the characteristic marks distinguished, which authorise their currency, and establish their truth ; the next point of enquiry is, whether any such illumination, revealing God's will in a more express, and clear, and concise manner, than by arguments and abstruse reasoning, hath ever taken place ; and whether the purpose to be promoted by it was such, as would justify the divine interposition.

Nations and countries have not varied more in their civil, than in their religious institutions. Some nations, in their opinions of the divine nature, have divided it into a multiplicity of Gods : and some have materialised it ; for the Creator mistaking, and worshipping, his works. Great and vain men have taken advantage of this general principle of religion,

SERMON VI. ligion, which possesses the minds of all mankind ; pretended the useful arts they invented, or their successes in war, those to have been the communications of their Gods, and these atchieved by their assistance : and from thence obtained, amongst their respective countrymen, the opinion of being the distinguished favourites of Heaven, and after death the honours of Deification.

The most antient people, of which prophane history professes to give us any account, are the *Ægyptians* and *Chal-dæans* : and of their histories the earliest period, to which we can refer, is the time of *Sesostris* ; about a thousand, or, as some contend, fifteen hundred, years before Christ. And the earliest representation, which the page of history holds out to us, of their religion and morals, discovers them to have been immersed in the grossest idolatry. Nor do the records of *Greece* afford us a more advantageous account of their most pristine

pristine state. The imaginary existences ^{SERMON}
of deceased men were the only Gods, ^{VI.}
they knew ; their will, when living,
the only rule of morals the people ac-
knowledged ; and their vices, after they
were dead, the sanction of incest, ambi-
tion, and outrage of every kind.

If, amidst such an idolatrous world,
there were a people, who thought and
acted otherwise ; who acknowledged
one only God, the Creator and Uphol-
der of all things ; who paid Him a con-
sistent service ; who lived in the ha-
bitual practice of duties resulting from a
proper knowledge, a love, a fear, a re-
verence of Him : we can account for
such knowledge, and such consistent
practice, only two ways. One is, that
those people must have been more wise
and pious, not only than any other
nation under Heaven ; but than a na-
tion, could such an one be conceived,
composed of individuals the most dis-
tinguished for superiour wisdom and
erudition,

SERMON erudition, a select nation of philosophers.
VI. Or else, that extraordinary degree of knowledge, they possessed, must have been communicated to them some other way ; than by the mere exertion of the natural powers of reason. The first of these suppositions certainly was not the case. The Jews assuredly did not possess more learning, than the rest of the nations, among whom they lived : but it may on the contrary be asserted, that in the early periods of that nation, before their emigration from *Ægypt*, indeed till the reigns of David and Solomon, they possessed less. The highest encomium on their great prince and legislator respecting his erudition was, that he *was skilled in all the learning of the Ægyptians* : a direct acknowledgment, that he had not acquired his learning and knowledge from his own countrymen ; but from a people more learned and intelligent than they were ; and of course more capable of instructing him. The latter hypothesis must be therefore the true one : and

and it consequently follows, that their ^{SERMON} _{VI.} knowledge of God and religion had been communicated to them by some shorter, clearer, more convincing, more influencing way.

And as such supernatural interposition of God, in revealing his will to mankind by an immediate illumination of the mind, that is, by inspiration, must have a sufficient assignable cause: if we enquire the purpose to be promoted in the instance before us; we shall find it the noblest, the most important, that can be conceived worthy to engage the divine interference. It was to keep alive in the human mind the almost extinguished principles of true religion; to teach and enforce the knowledge of God, and the relative duties of all rational beings from thence resulting: that the most elevated point of human knowledge; and this the first great duty of mankind. In pity to human weakness and infirmity, which to the most vile and abject pro-
trations

SERMON VI. trations had reduced the original perfect and dignified character of man, was this revelation made. Formed with a mind competent to know, and taught to commune with, his Creator ; still bearing the faint impression of His goodness, but lost to every proper idea of His nature ; he had humbled himself to the worship of an animal, a plant, a stock, or a stone. And from that abyss of ignorance to recover and reinstate him in the rank of intelligence, he once possessed ; was a purpose abundant to justify the interposition of God, in employing the only means equal to such an effect.

But besides the end or purpose assignable for such divine interference : some further evidence of the reality of it, as hath been already premised, is wanting. And no evidence can be produced so easy of conception, and so assuredly to be depended on, as miracles : the possibility of which having in a * former dif-

* See Sermon xi.

course

course been evinced, * we will now enter farther into the subject, and consider the circumstances necessary to authenticate the performance of them.

SERMON
VI.

By a miracle, we understand a sensible effect exceeding the known powers of nature. But as we are utterly ignorant, how far the powers of beings, good or bad, in superior classes of intelligence, may extend; we cannot be certain, that some phenomena, which appear, and are, to us really miraculous, may not have resulted from their agency. And it therefore follows, that miracles are not separately, and in themselves, proofs, that the workers of them are delegated messengers of God. Yet as it is highly repugnant to all our natural notions of the divine goodness, to suppose that He can leave men, who desire to know and follow truth, destitute of the necessary

* See Sermon ii. p. 38, &c.

L

means

SERMON VI. means of discriminating it from falsehood ; it also follows, that there must ever be some discernible traits and adjuncts, which mark and manifest His interposition. By what characters then are the miracles of true religion distinguishable from deceptions ? By plain peculiarities, as I conceive, in their nature, manners, and tendency.

We are, it is confessed, ignorant how far the power of evil spirits may extend : but we know how far it cannot extend : we know it is infinitely inferior to the power of God. Upon this principle, reason, concurring with scripture, appropriates some wonderful acts of a particular kind to God Himself, and as proceeding only from Him : such as the prediction of distant contingencies, depending upon the wills of free agents ; and the ability with unerring knowledge of disclosing the privacy of human thoughts. That an idea prevailed in the heathen world, of the possibility of those facts,

facts, appears from the endeavours used to establish the belief of them. What else was the pretence of their oracles ? How vain and futile such attempts, I will not go about to prove. I will not intrude on your time by exposing the futile boasts of augury, and the vain pretensions of such pillars of the art, as Nævius : his arrogated knowledge of human thoughts, a plain, palpable, collusive juggle between his prince and him, to procure confidence from an ignorant multitude, without authentic vouchers, without sufficient end ;

“ Nodus non NUMINE dignus.”

An observation this, which leads me to consider some attendant circumstances in extraordinary acts, as constituting another proof of their immediate procedure from God. As, when they are public, performed openly before great numbers ; and when the result of them is a notoriously permanent effect. These, if not equally infallible marks of the

SERMON ^{VI.} finger of God, as the super-natural operation itself, are corroborating proofs, amongst others, that they proceed from divine power ; that they are true and real miracles, and not, like those ascribed to magicians, oracles, and heathen augurs, the illusions of artifice, and pretensions of falsehood and imposture.

The tendency of those wonderful acts, or the purposes for which they were wrought, is likewise, as hath been intimated, a test of their divinity. A miracle, that tends to no purpose, or to a bad one, is on those very accounts suspicious. If the all-wise and good God ever suspend, or alter, the established course of nature ; it must be for some wise and good cause : for some important end, which could not otherwise be obtained. It must be immediately, or ultimately, for the removal of some pernicious and spreading errors, or the confirmation of some momentous truths ; in order to render mankind wiser and better.

ter. When therefore we are convinced, SERMON
VI. that miracles bear the characters above represented, are also attended with the marks and distinctions just described ; and that the ends, which in this enumeration of circumstantial evidence I have specified, are intended by them : we may be assured, that they proceed not from wicked spirits, such supposition implying a contradiction in ideas ; as it is contrary to their nature to promote good : and by consequence, that they are, and can be, only from God.

After these premised observations, let us proceed to take a general view of the revelation made to the Jews. All nations have in their respective religious institutions pretended to prophecies, miracles, and mysteries ; and considered such powers and discoveries to have been conferred on favoured individuals by the predilection and good-will of their Gods : which, though it do not prove, that the world in every special part of it has had

SERMON a revelation ; yet plainly evinces, that,
VI. by the judgment of the whole world,
there was reason to expect, and believe
one. Till the time of Moses, the records
of history were traditional : at least, we
have no assurance, till then, of any written
ones. He first digested the antient ac-
counts of historical facts ; and committed
them to writing. And in regard to the
narrative of antient facts, which he deli-
vers, and had received from tradition ; it
is to be observed, that those traditions,
from the longevity of the Ante-diluvians,
had not in the course of descent passed
through many reporters : * and the his-
torian seems to have related them without
the least prejudice or partiality to himself
or his nation. Nor doth tradition, permit
em to observe, carry an inconsiderable
weight with it ; or claim a moderate de-
gree of assent, when there appears nothing
to confront, or disprove it. And this is

* See Pufal's Thoughts.

so far the case in the instance before us, SERMON
that succeeding historians have in general VI.
points followed Moses's relation. They
have followed him in his record of the
creation of the world from a rude chaotic
mass ; of a paradisiacal age ; of the deter-
ioration of the world, through the vices
of mankind ; of an universal deluge.

From the diluvian period, this history
informs us, that in one particular family,
that family which survived the general
catastrophe, the belief of the unity of
God, creator and preserver of the world,
obtained : that in one particular branch
of that family, amidst its various migra-
tions, in its prosperous and depressed
state, whether independent, or in bondage,
amidst idolatrous people, oppressed by the
tyranny of idolatrous masters, it still re-
tained, and of all the nations of the world
alone maintained, that doctrine. It was
this doctrine, that united them so closely
to one another, and so continuedly sepa-

SERMON rated them from all the world ; as in it-
VI. self forms a perpetual miracle.

In the time of Moses, this family was increased to a numerous people : and as they had before been separated from the rest of the world by their religious principles, they were then to be divided from it in situation, and by an appropriated inheritance ; to be delivered from servitude, and become a distinct and independent nation. For that purpose the God, whom they served, raised them up a deliverer ; and empowered him, by a signal display of miraculous powers, to lead out from amidst a powerful and war-like nation an oppressed, unarmed, defenceless multitude : who were thus led forth, separated, and supported, to preserve, and diffuse among the rest of the world, the almost obliterated notions of true Theism, and the pure worship of the One God. And if any purpose, if any end, could justify the supernatural interposition of Almighty God in the display

display of miracles, this unquestionably SERMON VI.
did.

The religion of the Jews had been hitherto plain and simple: consisting in the knowledge of the Divine Unity, and the nature of that spiritual worship, which was due to Him. But the people were now to become a great and powerful nation: and their religion, destined within its pale to comprehend, and to bless the whole world, was now to take a new form; its essentials to be fenced with rites, and ceremonies, and usages, which had a further aspect than Moses saw, and led to a wider extent. Whatever of allegory there may possibly be in some part of that prophet's writings, and such there probably is; it militates not against the fundamental truth of the relation: the facts represented under these allegories are plain; and have, as well as the more nude representation of things, an unquestionable claim to our assent. And in his general detail of facts, so allegorised and represented, it may be further observed,

SERMON observed, that some of the gravest and
VI. best informed philosophers of antiquity
have followed him.

This religion resolves itself into a triple division : the prophetic, moral, and ceremonial : they are well designed parts in one great building ; each of distinct purpose, and design ; and all necessary to the perfection of the whole. The prophecies stamp on it the character of divinity : without the moral part, as a rule of conduct it would be defective : and the ceremonial part illustrates the prophetic.

As to the prophetic declarations of Moses, and the succession of prophets, that followed him, they have in the most exact and unequivocal manner been fulfilled : down from the first prophecy of *the woman's seed, which should bruise the serpent's head* ; to that dreadful monition of the future desolation of their city ; with the aggravating circumstance of the people being reduced to such extremity
of

of distress, as to be forced to *eat the flesh* SERMON
of their sons and their daughters: a pro- VI.
phesy, which was dreadfully fulfilled at
the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. Exa-
mine other predictions, respecting more
recent times; and you will find some
fulfilled, and others every day fulfilling.

The moral part, an universal rule of
conduct, was to continue the same al-
ways and every where: custom cannot
change it, time cannot render it obsolete,
nor will even the plea of necessity excuse
the observance of it. *Though heaven and
earth pass away, not one jot, or one tittle,
of the moral law shall fail.*

But the ritual and ceremonial part of
that religion was figurative and typical;
even in the person of the great legislator
himself. He was sent by God to be a
deliverer. But out of Sion, as the apostle
argues, came the true Deliverer: a
Deliverer in that extensive sense of the
word, in which the Messiah is described
by

SERMON by the prophets : a Deliverer, through
VI. whom all the world should be saved. The institution of sacrifices, which originated in the earliest ages of the world, and in every part of it prevailed, apart from reverence to that great sacrifice destined to be made in the person of the Messiah, is of all strange practices the most inexplicable. On any other ground considered, the custom of offering up slaughtered animals, to expiate human offences, must appear to have proceeded from the wildest notions, the imagination of man had ever conceived. But an enthusiastic conceit, without any reasonable pretence, seldom lasts long ; and never could become universal. The universality of the practice therefore adds to the improbability, shall I call it, or impossibility of it ; except founded in reason and truth. And the reason and the truth of it can only consist, in its aspect to the great sacrifice destined in Christ ; and are evidenced in the long continuation of the practice prefigured.

The

The deliverance from the bondage of Ægypt is a type of the deliverance of mankind from the bondage of sin ; each preceded by similar circumstances, one of the Paschal feast, and the other of Christ's last supper ; the one plainly prefigured by the other, and both conspiring to mark, beyond the possibility of mistake, the grand ante-type of our redemption. What do their frequent ablutions signify, but what Christ seems to allude to ; the purity of the heart ? *Ye hypocrites*, says he, *ye are very careful in washing the outside of the cup and platter ; but within ye are full of all uncleanness.* That is, ye blind, who can carry your eye no farther than the type ; than the mere ordinance, perfectly insignificant without a reference to the reason, the ground, and the substantiality of it. In short, it is not difficult, in most of their ceremonies, to discover an aspect to a future reality : those temporary institutions tending, like so many elucidating circumstances, to point out that Re-deemer :

SERMON deemer ; in whom they were taught to
VI. expect a final and compleat salvation.

And those external observances whose references and allusions lay less open to explanation, so rigidly exacted, and so strictly observed, do in no small degree contribute to stamp on it the evidence of divine authority. Burthen-some as they certainly are, ridiculous as in some instances they may appear, silly and fantastical as they have sometimes been held ; even those rites and ceremonies, contribute like under-parts to the one great design ; the proof, that it is of more than human institution. Besides the typical reference some of them contain : others have been observed * to strike at idolatrous customs ; and were calculated to guard the true Theist from heathen practices, and every tendency to idol service.

* Vid. Spencer de Leg. Heb.

And

And considered also in another view, SERMON VI.
they equally demand our admiration, and claim a rational assent to the divine original of the institution. For what private man can be supposed, without the authority of station, unsupported by the arm of power, to have had such influence over a whole nation ; as, by his bare recommendation, to induce them to burthen themselves with such a grievous load of vain rites and futile ordinances, vain and futile if considered only with a view to the institutions themselves, as the Jews bound themselves to observe ? What individual, unless divinely authorised, would have presumed to persuade a whole nation, to abridge themselves of so many gratifications, which the rest of the world enjoyed ; and to submit implicity to such restraints, particularly respecting the observance of the Sabbath, as might be, and was often really, prejudicial to them not only in a private, but a public capacity ? And, with less than divine support, what individual

SERMON individual could in so arduous an under-
VI. taking have prevailed ? What other motive, what weaker authority, what inferior power, can human sagacity conceive ; of sufficient urgency, to influence a numerous people to observe the ceremonies above alluded to, from the first period of their institution to the present day, through a succession of more than three thousand years, with that uninterrupted and rigid adherence, with which the whole nation of the Jews have embraced them ?

Examine the direct and immediate miracles of Moses, from the time of crossing the Red Sea to the approach of the people to the promised land, the principal of which are recapitulated by him in the 11th chapter of Deuteronomy, according to the criteria above laid down : and you will find in them every intrinsic mark of genuine truth and authenticity. They were sensible effects, exceeding the known powers

powers of human nature : they were so plain that every sense was convinced of them ; and as public, as the presence of multitudes could render them. They were instantaneous and compleat : and the result of them was a notorious and permanent effect. The internal character of divine power, displayed in the performance of them, is marked by the doctrine, which they tended to establish ; the doctrine of pure Theism : and the effect, that hath been already experienced from them, is the acknowledgment of that doctrine by the much greater part of the globe.

What then do we collect from the preceding observations, respecting the nature and extent of the religion of the Jews ? Briefly this : that it is founded in truth, imperfect in its institution, extensive in its influence. It was not a religion, consisting of fopperies borrowed from different nations, framed by different persons, and put together at different

M times,

SERMON
VI.

SERMON times, one superadded to another. It
VI. was the stupendous work of one man :
by him proposed to a numerous people ;
from the moment it was proposed, by
that people universally received ; and to
the present period of time uninterruptedly
observed. The purity of it was guarded
with uncommon caution : for fear of in-
troducing corruptions into it, the interests
of policy were disregarded, and national
advantages overlooked ; the people were
restricted from intermarriages with other
nations, and thereby precluded from
strengthening themselves by those ad-
vantageous alliances, which from such
ties are often derived. A numerous and
respectable priesthood was instituted and
supported : their sole charge the conser-
vation of the pure religion committed to
them ; the employment of their lives the
duties and service of it. It involved
their whole law, and by the priests was
read and expounded to the people every
week. And does not all this form, and
care, and ceremony ; this so expedite
pro-

promulgation, so ready and general acceptance of it, even had it wanted those genuine characters of divinity, which miracles stamped on it, mark its pre-eminence to every other religion of the world; and demonstrate its truth?

SERMON
VI.

But with all those characters of divinity and truth, it was imperfect. Its rites and ceremonies discovered nothing intrinsically wise and good: they were plain allusions to something that was to succeed. And even its moral part, though far as it went compleat, was destined to receive improvement. It was very indecisive in its doctrine of a future state: its promises were national, temporal; as to period of time uncertain, and probably distant. To some future period they were taught to direct their views: and thither they looked, as for the completion of their greatness, so likewise for the perfection of their knowledge. They wanted direct and satisfactory information on many points: left by the provi-

SERMON VI. dence of God, on many important articles, involved in a degree of darkness ; in order to add lustre to the advent of that eminent personage, they were taught to expect, the Messiah ; who, when he came, *would teach them all things.*

As to the influence of this religion, whether regarding time or place, so extensive was it ; that it was destined to reach from pole to pole, and to continue to the end of the world. All nations were comprehended in its promises ; and the gradual performance of them, proceeding with time, was ordained to be completed and perfected in immortality.

This religion, in its rites and ceremonies, in whatever parts of it were prefigurative and typical, is now a dead religion ; no longer engaging the attention of mankind, or claiming their observance of it. But its moral parts, far as its doctrines go, are unchangeably good.

good. Let us therefore consider it as a SERMON
valuable relic : let us regard it with that VI.
reverence, it merits : a light, first shining
in an obscure place, but from the time,
when it was given, increasing in bright-
ness more and more ; and in its destined
period breaking out in meridian lustre :
its rays still continuing to diverge ; un-
til its *light shall lighten the Gentiles*, and
all the world shall acknowledge THE
GLORY OF ISRAEL.

S E R M O N VII.

Matt. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

SERMON
VII. **I**N the great concern of instructing mankind in the knowledge of God, and the duties from thence resulting, we have seen how far the powers of reason went: its incompetence to that effect hath been proved from fact and experience; and the consequent necessity of a revelation inferred. From that inference, without descending to a comparative view of such revelations, as have respectively urged their claim to divinity; which, with great judgment and erudition, hath, on the occasion that now engages my attention, been already done; *

* See White's Sermons.

I pro-

I proceeded to examine the merits of SERMON
that revelation, which hath the most VII.
undoubted pretensions to it: and, I trust,
satisfactorily evinced, that the revelation
made to the Jews, though in the first
period of its promulgation restricted to
a single nation, was destined in its is-
sue to become universal: and even in
the mean time, amidst the vicissitudes
of that people, in their migrations from
one country to another, whether in a
state of conquest or captivity, they left
scattered remnants of the truths com-
mitted to them wherever they went.
And hence have those adumbrations of
antient facts, which may be traced in
prophane history, embellished by poetic
imagination, contributed not a little to
the various systems of Heathen mytho-
logy. Even the expectation of a Messi-
ah extended farther, than the religion of
the Jews: towards the period of Christ's
appearance in the world, the attention
of the Heathen was in some degree ex-
cited to the advent of an illustrious cha-
racter,

SERMON racter, who should form the world to
VII. happiness ; teaching them all things that
it was expedient to know, and performing
all that was necessary to be done, in
order to promote universal bliss, and ef-
fectuate the prosperity of mankind.

And as this general expectation of the Jews, declared by a series of prophecy, supported the truth of that Messiah's appearance, when Christ came, and in that character professed himself ; no exertions have been spared, to invalidate the force of such expectations. It hath been asserted, that it was very natural for people under oppression to look forward, and flatter themselves with the hopes of some great character ; who should rise up among them, and break their servile yoke : — that the Jewish priests by their enigmatical oracular declarations cherished those expectations in the people, in order to quicken their exertions ; — and that the Jews were a credulous, enthusiastic people, always open

open to the deceptions of the crafty SERMON
priesthood. VII.

In my present discourse, therefore, I propose, 1st, to consider the general expectation of a Messiah, that prevailed amongst the Jews; and in this discussion to examine distinctly the objections to it, as already stated.

And to enquire, 2dly, whether their prophets represent him to have been a temporal prince and conqueror, or something greater.

I. The first of these points, it is obvious, regards those, who deny the truth of revelation; and who, to invalidate the doctrine of a promised Messiah, a doctrine on which the Christian religion rests, describe the Jews as a credulous, enthusiastic people, oppressed by their conquerors, impatient under their sufferings, and taught by former deliverances, often great and unexpected, *so much beyond*

SERMON ^{VII.} *yond all that they hoped for*, to look forward to some future Moses, Joshua, or Zerubbabel; the deliverer a fictitious character, and the doctrine a delusion of priestcraft and imposture.

If only when smarting under the oppressive arm of conquest, in their forlorn migrations, or in their various scenes of captivity, those prophetic declarations of a future deliverer had been pronounced; there might have been some degree of pertinency in the reflection, that attributes them to delusive expectations, derived from desperation and distress. But in the most flourishing and prosperous state of the nation, during their most brilliant periods of conquest and success, regularly and uniformly did their prophets predict the advent of an illustrious person of their own nation; destined to establish a kingdom that should endure for ever. Even the most successful and powerful princes themselves, in the spirit of prophecy, declared the time would come;

come; when under a powerful prince, ^{SERMON} ~~VII.~~ whom the Lord would send to visit ~~VII.~~ Israel, *all nations should be gathered under God*: that he would then *set up a kingdom, which should never be destroyed; and all that should see them*, when the kingdom of their Messiah should be established, *shall acknowledge them, that they are a seed blessed of the Lord.* In short, the whole tenour of the Old Testament points out, and the great scope of it seems particularly directed to, that first and great purpose, the establishment of a belief in one particular person, destined to *reign and prosper; and execute judgment and justice on the earth*: whose title, importing his high office, was to be, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**: who was to possess *dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, so universal*; that *all people, nations, and languages should serve him.* His dominion is described as *an everlasting dominion, which should not pass away; and his kingdom that, which should not be destroyed.*

Nor

SERMON

VII.

Nor was this notion entirely confined to the Jews: Tacitus, in his account of that people, speaks of it as an expectation entertained by many; but refers the foundation of it to certain doctrines contained in the scriptures of their priests.

“ Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis fa-
 “ cerdotum litteris contineri, eo ipso
 “ tempore fore, ut valesceret **Oriens**,
 “ profectique **Judæa** rerum potirentur &
 “ quæ ambages **Vespasianum** et **Titum**
 “ prædixerant.”* +

Josephus has the same observation: and imputes to the influence of such prediction the vigorous exertions of the Jews, in the course of that fatal war, which ended in the desolation of their city. “ Το δε επαρχαν αυτες μαλιστα προς τον

* Tacitus Hist. lib. v.

+ A general persuasion prevailed, that in the antient scriptures of their priests it was declared; the power of the East should be established, and from **Judæa** those should proceed, who would obtain the sovereignty of the world: which mysterious prediction was fulfilled in **Vespasian** and **Titus**.

“ πολεμού,

“ πολεμουν, πν χρισμος αμφιβολος ομοιως εν τοις SERMON
 “ ιεροις ευρημενος γραμμασιν, ως κατα του καιρου VII.
 “ εκεινουν, απο της χωρας τις αυτων αρξει της οικου-
 “ μενης. Τουτο οι μεν ως οικειον εξελαθον, και πολ-
 “ λοι των σωφων επλανηθοσαν περι την χριστιν.
 “ Εδηλα δ' αμα την περι Ονεσπασιαν το λογιον πγε-
 “ μουιαν, αποδειχθεντος επι Ιουδειας αυτοχρα-
 “ τορος.” * †

Cicero, in a letter to Lentulus, alludes to a Sibylline oracle, purporting the same event; which he applies to Ptolomy.

“ Cum eam [nempe Alexandriam]
 “ pace præfidiisque firmaris, Ptolomæus
 “ redeat in regnum; ita fore, ut per te

* Joseph. lib. vi. cap. xxxi.

† But what chiefly excited their exertions, and supported their perseverance in the war, was an equivocal oracle, which appears to have been found in their antient scriptures; purporting, that about that time some one from that country should sway the sceptre of the world. And the person, so designed, they understood to be one of their own nation: a circumstance, in which many of their most learned were deceived. For it is very clear, that the prediction referred to the sovereignty of Judæa possessed by Vespasian.

“ resti-

SERMON VII. " restituatur, quemadmodum senatus
" initio censuit : et sine multitudine re-
" ducatur, quemadmodum homines re-
" ligiosi Sibyllæ placere dixerunt." * +

Nor will the pretended character of the Jews, as being a credulous and enthusiastic people, add any weight to the preceding objection ; founded on the feelings of desperation and distress. Enthusiasm and credulity might have prompted them to take up arms, and list under the banner of every adventurous chief, who should have ambition or address sufficient to set himself up for that *Son of Promise*. It is the nature of enthusiasm and credulity, to prompt to rash and daring enterprises. They allow no

* CIC. lib. 1. Epist ad Lent.

+ When you have effected the peace establishment of Alexandria, and properly garrisoned it. Let Ptolemy return to his kingdom : so will he appear to be restored by you, as the senate at first determined ; and to be brought back without tumult or violence, as religious men have supposed the Sibyl predicted.

time to reason and reflect: they warm SERMON
the heart with a sort of hallowed fire; VII.
that impetuously presses forward with a
power superior to the love of glory,
and vanquishes doubt by a principle
more efficacious than the dread of shame.
Actuated only by the goad of despera-
tion, and the influence of enthusiasm
and credulity, the Jews would not so
passively have borne their hopes and ex-
pectations for so many ages, as they
were known to have done: their pro-
phets in a long succession continuing to
promise them a Messiah, and they in
full conviction of the truth of such pro-
mises patiently continuing age after age
to expect him.

Nor do the accounts, with which the
annals of that people furnish us, of a
banditti of profligate and disorderly men,
assembled under the conduct of this or
that desperate chief, who might boast
himself of consequence, and assume the
character of a deliverer, affect the truth
of

SERMON of the above remark. No state is free
VII. from partial insurrections of men ruined
and desperate; who frame grievances,
and oppose order, for the sake of rapine
and plunder. Those riotous mobs do
not invalidate the argument, against the
imputation of enthusiasm, credulity, and
desperation; founded on the quiet, pas-
sive, general expectation of a Messiah: by
their prophets described in characters
very different from those, which mark
the ruffian leaders, that in the Jewish,
as well as every other state, may have
occasionally drawn together a rabble for
purposes such as these. Or, if indepen-
dent of every motive of licentiousness
and rapine, the bare pretence of Messia-
hship had power and influence enough
to draw together a company of men,
ready at the hazard of their lives to sup-
port such an expectation; the effect
evinces the strong and efficacious per-
suasion of the real advent of a promised
Messiah.

And

And as to the pretence of such promises having been the forgery of their priests, calculated to call forth the exertions of the people under any enterprising chief that might occasionally arise, of courage to attempt, and conduct to execute, a plan of deliverance from captivity or bondage, and establish once more their kingdom by conquest ; those prophecies, to afford any ground for the supposition, must have been confined to the day of tribulation : which has been already observed not to be the case. Their priests also in the commission of such acts of forgery, their priests must have been wretched politicians ; a reflection this, which does not appear founded in exact truth ; and their chiefs and civil officers very negligent and remiss, in suffering such incentives to anarchy and confusion to be proposed to the people. We must therefore conclude, that the predictions in the old testament of a Messiah, the prophecies of kings and princes, declared in times of prosperity, as well as in periods of distress, regular-

N

ly

SERMON
VII.

SERMON ly continued in a course of near two
VII. thousand years, were not the forgeries
of priests: and, that the people's belief
in them, was not the effect of enthu-
siasm and credulity, but a rational as-
sent; an assent, which neither the va-
rying circumstance of affluence or pe-
nury could alter, the false pretensions
of persons, who had at different times
assumed that character, could remove,
nor disappointment of any kind induce
them to relinquish. For what is it, that
could effect this, but a rational ground of
belief; what is it, that could render
such a notion so efficacious and univer-
sal, but the genuine stamp of divinity
and truth?

If however we be to have it eternally
in our ears, that the Jews are an enthu-
siaſtic and credulous people: without
allusion to the conſequences, let us free-
ly examine the objection itſelf; and it
will be found to a degree futile and ab-
ſurd. An individual or two may be cre-
dulous and enthuſiaſtic. A whole family,
through

through some successions, held in ignorance, and biased by the early prejudice of parental example, may possess minds strongly tinctured with enthusiasm and credulity. It shall even be allowed that a whole nation, while they continue immersed in barbarism, and involved in ignorance, may from those circumstances derive an enthusiastic zeal and bigotry in support of false tenets, which they may have credulously adopted. But that nature should as it were have moulded the minds of a whole nation with a peculiar disposition to believe absurd, and fancy vain, things ; a nation, who have lived, at various periods, among the most polished and scientific people of the world ; who among themselves have boasted many characters eminent for their great erudition ; who have with freedom canvassed, and with abilities investigated, the volume, that contains their own religion ; have, in their admission of the contents of that volume, discriminated truth from falsehood, facts from pretences, records of authenticity

SERMON
VII.

SERMON from doubtful relations ; and, what may
VII. weigh most with the characters, to whom these reflections are particularly addressed, a liberal-minded people, who had their free-thinkers, as well as we : that credulity and enthusiasm should be the constitutional characteristics of such a people, is a paradox, which sober reason can never explain. But any thing it seems is to be admitted, rather than a doctrine tending to support the credibility of a religion, whose universality levels the distinction of illiterate and wise ; whose large pale, exalting virtue wherever found, comprehends every good heart, and willing mind : humiliating to philosophic pride ; and at the same time so inconsistent with the pursuits of the voluptuous, that they must either renounce their pleasures, or give up all the advantages their religion proposes.

Having thus endeavoured to obviate the objections, that have been advanced against the doctrine of a promised Messiah ;

siah ; it would be a vain intrusion on ^{SERMON} VII. your time, farther to particularise the scriptural predictions importing such a promise, or more at large to insist on proofs of the universal credit, the Jews themselves gave to the doctrine ; looking forwards to the destined period with animated hopes. It is a doctrine by their prophets so plainly revealed, and so earnestly enforced ; that if, deaf to the voice of prophecy, blind to the appeal of miracles, without one good reason for so perverse a conduct, the Jews had rejected it ; deservedly would they have incurred the reproach of the most invincible stupidity, that ever marked a devoted people. It was uninterruptedly inculcated by all their prophets, down from Moses to Malachi : who uniformly predicted a particular kingdom, that God would erect, which should never be destroyed ; and a particular person, whose dominion was to be an everlasting dominion. ONE particular king, and not a race of kings, is throughout the

SERMON whole line of prophecy designed. The
VII. Jews understood it so ; and from such interpretation of the predictions concluded, that the Messiah should never die. Accordingly when our Saviour gave intimation of his death : the Jews immediately replied, *we have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever ; how sayest thou then, that the son of man must be lifted up ?* And when he talked to his disciples of his death and sufferings ; Peter could not bear a reflection that so shocked his hopes, and answered, *that be far from thee, Lord.*

And after prophecy was silent ; that is, from the time of Malachi to the advent of our Lord, the expectation of Israel did not cease. Indeed, as the time destined for the completion of this important prophecy approached ; the hope of the promise became more and more lively. Some of the heathen oracles caught the ray of illumination : and about the time, that our Saviour visited the

the world, the expected appearance of a SERMON
 great and powerful prince became so ^{VII.}
 common ; that it was applied, as hath
 been already intimated, to several hea-
 then princes. And from that so general
 and prevalent expectation, some have at-
 tacked the doctrine on the ground of its
 novelty : as a notion, which first ob-
 tained credit about the time of Herod.

But, says Vossius, we must go farther
 back for it : so far as the time, when
 Pompey made himself master of Jerusa-
 lem : fifty nine years before Christ, and
 exactly on the completion of Daniel's
 sixty second week.* Suetonius speaks of
 a prediction, previous to the birth of
 Augustus ; “ Regem Populo Romano
 “ naturam parturire.” + And Cicero
 alludes to the same oracle, as well in
 the epistle to Lentulus cited above, as in
 the following passage in his treatise on

* Vossius de sibyllinis oraculis lib. iv.

+ That nature was in labour of a king destined to
 rule the Romans.

SERMON divination. * " Sibyllæ versus observa-

VII. " mus, quos illa furens fudisse dicitur.
 " Quorum interpres nuper falsa quædam
 " hominum fama dicturus in Senatu
 " putabatur: cum, quem revera regem
 " habebamus, appellandum quoque esse
 " regem, si salvi esse vellemus." + This
 oracle was applied to Julius Cæsar: on
 which interpretation Cicero, glowing
 with the flame of patriotism, proceeds;
 " Cum antistitibus agamus, et quidvis
 " potius ex illis libris, quam regem
 " proferant: quem Romæ posthæc nec
 " dii, nec homines esse patientur." ‡
 After the death of Cæsar, this illustrious

* Lic. de divinitatione lib. ii.

† Observe the verses of the Sibyl, which the frantic
 priests is said to have dictated: whose interpreter was
 thought to have drawn from thence in the senate false
 conclusions; suggesting, that he, whom we in reality
 admitted as king, must be acknowledged and stiled a
 king, if we wish to be saved.

‡ But might I exchange a word with the priests, I
 would recommend it to them, rather to produce any
 thing from their books, than a king: whom neither
 Gods or men will ever suffer hereafter to exist in Rome.

prophecy

prophecy was applied to Augustus : Virgil compliments his friend and patron Pollio with the application of it to his infant son : and others again subscribed to the gross adulation of Josephus ; who condescended to betray the high privileges of his nation, and applied the promise to Vespasian. Many extracts might be made from the Sibylline books, alluding to different circumstances attending that promised event ; but I will content myself with producing the single one, adverted to by the authors, whom I have cited above.

SERMON
VII.

Αυταρ επει Ρωμη τε και Αιγυπτος Βασιλεια
Εις εν διθυνεσσα, τοτε δη Βασιλεια μεγιση
Αθανατος Βασιλος επ' αιθρωποιστι φανειται.
Ηξει δ' αγνος αναξ τασσης γης σκηνητρα χρατησων
Εις αιωνας παντας επειγομενοιο χρονοιο.
Και τοτε Λατινων απαραιτητος χολος ανδρων,
Τρεις Ρωμην οικτρη μοιρη καταδηλησονται. *

From

* *Orac. Sibyl. lib. ii.*
But after Rome and Egypt shall unite

Their

SERMON **VII.** From what has been above observed, it is beyond contradiction evident ; that the doctrine of a promised Messiah is not only asserted in the scriptures of the Old Testament, but by heathen oracles declared ; not only believed by the Jews, but admitted and adverted to by profane authors, of the first rank, and the most polished ages. Let us then proceed to the second article of enquiry : which was, whether the prophets represent the Messiah as a temporal prince and conqueror, or something greater.

II. In supposing the Messiah to appear in the character of a powerful and triumphant prince, who should establish the kingdom of Israel on so sure and

Their powers, and an extended empire rise ;
A prince immortal shall the sceptre sway :
A king immaculate ; whose realms no line
Shall circumscribe, his reign no point of time.
Inexorable then the rage of Rome :
And under three the power of Rome shall fall.

solid

solid a foundation, that it should through SERMOW
all ages continue mistress of the world, ^{VII.}
and that all nations should finally submit
to it ; the Jews had one great difficulty
to encounter : and this was the state of
humiliation, in which some prophecies
represented him. An oppressed and de-
spised Saviour, suffering insults, and nei-
ther in word or act vindictively retali-
ating, displaying not the indignant spi-
rit of an earthly conqueror, but an ex-
emplar of meekness, patience, and hu-
mility, was little calculated to assume
the port of worldly grandeur ; and, by
the workings of a bold and daring mind,
to keep a profligate world in awe : it
confounded their expectations, and croff-
ed the proud and towering hopes, they
had entertained of him.

A State of such description as this did
by no means comport even with the
flattering ideas, his own disciples at first
formed of his future greatness. De-
pressed and dispirited at his crucifixion,
they

SERMON they gave up every thing for lost :
VII. and mourned their disappointed hopes in
their crucified master ; whom they then
deplored, that they had vainly *thought*
to have been him, who should have redeemed
Israel. But this erroneous opinion we
find soon corrected : for after he had *ex-
plained to them the scriptures concerning*
himself ; they, who on his apprehension
had denied, and on his crucifixion had
lost all hopes in him, after his resurrec-
tion and their frequent conversations
with him, stood boldly forth in his de-
fence : publickly arraigned the Jews for
their impiety in having murthered an
innocent person, and Him their own
Messiah, the Lord of life ; and gloried
in suffering ignominy and stripes for his
sake. So clearly did those scriptures,
properly understood, point out a suffer-
ing Saviour.

This suffering state of the Messiah,
described in terms so explicit, as some
thought could not be denied, and so
glaringly

glaringly contradicting the idea of that SERMON
glorious state, in which all expected VII.
their Messiah to appear, raised a diffi-
culty ; which to obviate, two methods
have by the later Jews been devised : one
explaining it away, and the other deny-
ing the application of it.

1. First, in evasion of those prophecies,
so injurious as the Jews conceived them
to the dignity of their Saviour and De-
liverer ; the doctrine of the supposed
advent of two different Messiahs was
adopted : the one an afflicted, suffering
Messiah, destined to teach them patience
and resignation ; and the other a great
and glorious prince, sent to reward them
for their sufferings. But this notion has
not the least foundation in the scrip-
tures : where the Messiah is constantly,
uniformly, and clearly represented, as
the one Redeemer, *the Holy One of Israel : the Lord said unto my Lord, thou art a priest for ever* : and the like. It is a
futile and vain conceit, without any au-
thority

SERMON VII. thority from their most antient and genuine writings to support it. And they may with equal pretence admit a number of Messiahs, as two ; Elijah, Jeremiah, and every afflicted suffering prophet, that was sent to them. *

2. The other mode of interpretation denies the application of those descriptions to the Messiah : referring them to their nation at large, as figurative representations of it in its several periods of captivity and oppression. But if the predictions of the glorious appearance of the Messiah be taken in a literal sense ; we have the same ground for applying a literal meaning to those prophecies, that describe his humiliation.

* Vid. Pocock Appen. ad. Comm. in Malachi : Ch. iii. V. 1. Ecce ego mitto angelum meum, et præparabit viam meam, et statim veniet ad templum suum Dominus, quem vos queritis, et Angelus Fæderis, quem vos vultis ; ecce venit, dicit Dominus Exercituum.

Who

Who of the Jews, antient or modern, ever doubted of the following representations being descriptive of the Messiah ?

SERMON
VII.

“ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son
“ is given : and the government shall
“ be upon his shoulders ; and his name
“ shall be called Wonderful, Counsel-
“ lor, the Mighty God, the Father
“ of the everlasting Age, the Prince of
“ Peace : of the increase of his govern-
“ ment and peace there shall be no end,
“ upon the throne of David, and upon
“ his kingdom to fix it, and to establish
“ it, with judgment, and with justice,
“ henceforth and for ever.” Again :
“ The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon
“ him, the spirit of wisdom and under-
“ standing, the spirit of counsel and
“ strength ; the spirit of the knowledge
“ and fear of Jehovah : and he shall be
“ of quick discernment in the fear of
“ Jehovah, so that not according to the
“ sight of his eyes shall he judge, nor
“ according to the hearing of his ears
“ shall he reprove ; but with righteous-
“ ness

SERMON VII. " ness shall he judge the poor, and with equity shall he work conviction on the meek of the earth. He shall smite the earth with the blast of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he flay the wicked." Is there any one, that affixes to those descriptions of Isaiah a figurative meaning? Certainly not: and for this just reason; because the literal sense is plain and obvious, admitting no doubt, and involving no difficulty. There is nothing forced, or strained, or inconsistent in the literal meaning; and therefore every rule of sound criticism withholds us from flying to a figurative interpretation.

If by the same rule of criticism we judge the same prophet's representation of the humiliated state of the Messiah; we shall find it charactered in as strong lines in the 53d chapter of Isaiah, as his exalted state has been noted in the passages above adduced. Indeed this description, taken in a literal sense, is not only

only plain throughout, and uniformly ^{SERMON.} perspicuous : but in affixing a figurative ^{VII.} meaning to it, and applying it to the Jewish nation, there are parts of it, such as refer to the atonement of the Messiah ; which are perfectly, irreconcileable with every accommodation of common sense. For instance : “ surely our infirmities “ hath he borne ; and our sorrows, he “ hath carried them : yet we thought “ him judicially stricken, smitten of “ God, and afflicted. But he was “ wounded for our transgressions : he “ was smitten for our iniquities. The “ chastisement, by which our peace is “ effected, was laid upon him ; and by “ his bruises we are healed.” Take this passage figuratively : and I conceive it will be very difficult to prove the connection, the necessary connection between the suffering state of the Jewish nation at one period, and its easy, peaceful, happy state at another ; or by what nice and secret train of causes and effects

O

this

SERMON this depended on, and was effected by,
VII the other.

What conclusion then do these reflections produce? Clearly this. That the absurd device of the later Jews to obviate the predictions of the humiliated state of the Messiah, by the admission of two Messiahs, tends to establish the belief of a suffering Messiah. And with regard to the other opinion of such description, as figurative of the Jewish nation; the letter is so irreconcileable with the figure, as to destroy every attempt at accommodation. And the inference from thence must be; that, those prophetic descriptions of the Messiah being in both instances literal, in him must meet the abasement of a meek, humble, oppressed, persecuted person, and the august glories of a prince, whose government and kingdom shall last for ever.

Full as the Jews were of the idea of a Saviour and Deliverer, a powerful and puissant

puissant prince, who should obtain for them universal empire ; we are not surprised to find them endeavouring by every means, determined by any forced and foreign construction, to get rid of the doctrine of a suffering Messiah. But we have also seen, that the very same arguments, which prove his glorious and exalted state, are equally strong in evincing his humiliation. And obstinate as they have been in rejecting the declarations of their own prophets respecting the one ; we will next enquire, whether their notions respecting the other be more consonant with their scriptures. Their opinion is briefly this : " that an illustrious prince should rise up among them, and by force of arms establish his kingdom : that under his auspices they should triumph over their enemies, and that even to the latest period of time Jerusalem should give law to all the world." With this opinion I proceed to confront some of those prophecies, which are

SERMON unanimously considered as descriptive of
VII. the state and character of a glorious and
exalted Messiah.

And first, had they well considered the whole scope of the prophecies relating to the kingdom of the Messiah ; they would have been convinced that a spiritual, and not a temporal, kingdom was pourtrayed. *Righteousness and equity*, according to the prophecies already cited, are the constant marks of it ; and not conquests charactered in blood : *with judgment and justice* it was to be supported ; and not by the oppressive arm of strength : by *the knowledge and fear of Jebovah* it was to be maintained, and not by the rod of earthly power. *I the Lord, saith Isaiah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee ; and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, and bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them, who sit in darkness, out of their prison house.* His office

office is here plainly described to consist in the dissemination of true knowledge : he is marked out, or *called forth*, as it is expressed, not by exploits of conquest, but as an exemplar of righteousness : his destination is, not to controul the world with the authority of a chief and conqueror, but to disseminate heavenly knowledge even among the Gentiles ; and by the illumination of the spirit to open the understanding of the blind, and release them from the prison house of ignorance and sin. And how compleatly he should be qualified for these high offices another prophecy declares : *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his root ; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and the fear of the Lord.*

The text, I have next to produce, seems particularly addressed to their pre-

SERMON judiced opinion of a temporal prince and
VII. mighty conquerour. *He shall not cry, or*
more properly, shout, which the original
word פֹּזֶה in this place signifies, and
under it the shout of war is alluded to,
nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard
in the streets: a bruised reed shall he not
break, nor quench the smoaking flax; but he
shall bring forth judgment unto truth: he
shall not be crushed, nor discouraged, till he
bath set judgment in the earth, and the Gentiles
shall BELIEVE IN HIS NAME. This
prophecy is not only descriptive of what
the Messiah should be, but declarative of
what he should not be. It declares that
his appearance shall not be in the char-
acter of a warrior; an invader of ter-
ritories, to which he has no right, and a
stormer of peaceful cities: but that so
inoffensive should he appear, so far from
exertions of power, so far from leading
war and destruction in his train; that
he should not even break a bruised reed,
should exercise no act of violence, nor
carry desolation into the most impotent
state; implied under the figure of extin-
guishing

guishing the feeble light of an expiring lamp. The object of achievement, to which he was destined, was not to render the Gentiles tributary to Jerusalem, but to bring the Gentiles into a common hope in Jerusalem's Messiah ; to conciliate a **BELIEF** in his name, a trust and confidence in the divinity of his mission.

SERMON
VII.

If we examine the 45th psalm, which the Jewish doctors unanimously acknowledged to be prophetic of the Messiah, notwithstanding the figures of worldly majesty under which he is described, it is plainly declared that He shall prosper and reign *BECAUSE of his truth, and meekness, and righteousness* ; *that his throne should be for ever and ever* : and, as a characteristic of his kingdom, that *the sceptre of it should be a sceptre of RIGHTEOUSNESS*. The 110th psalm has the same general evidence of the learned Jews, in proof of its reference to the Messiah. He is there represented, as an everlasting high priest : a term significant of his

N 4 holiness :

SERMON holiness : and termed by David, *bis*
VII. *Lord* ; who should sit at the right hand
of God, there to contemplate the subju-
gation of his enemies. Doth this de-
scription comport with the character of
an earthly conqueror ? And doth it not
comport with that of a heavenly dele-
gate ? And as the nature of heavenly
greatness is indescribable by an earthly
pen, it was natural to cloath it under
images of mortal glory. And what
scene of earthly glory equals that of tri-
umphant power and conquest ? *The Lord*
shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion ;
rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. *The*
Lord at thy right hand shall strike through
kings in the day of his wrath : He shall fill
the places with the dead bodies : He shall
wound the heads over many countries.

Let us next examine the prophecy of
Nathan ; the former part of which di-
rectly points to Solomon : *he shall build*
me a house, and I will establish his throne
for ever. The prophet then, in the spi-
rit

rit of divination, instead of dwelling on SERMON VII.
his subject, rapt with divine enthusiasm
at the prospect presented to his mind, di-
rects his prediction to the endless dura-
tion of that kingdom under the Messiah :
declaring that God *would be His father,*
and He should be His son: that He would
settle him in his house and in his kingdom for
ever. Good kings, and prophets, God
sometimes denominates his servants. So
was Moses styled, and David. But no
one, except Christ, was ever styled in an
especial and particular manner His son.
The term **FATHER**, had it stood alone,
might perhaps have by some been sup-
posed to denote the tendernes and affec-
tion, which God promised to shew him :
but the antithetic term son discovers a
more marked and restricted meaning.
It was too distinguishing a title, to be
conferred on a mere human prince and
governor. It was never applied to either
of the characters noticed above ; and
could with much less propriety be ascri-
bed to an inferior one, as was Solo-
mon :

SERMON mon : inferior in piety, in zeal for
VII. God, and concern for his people. Moses
was a prince and leader, and David a
king : both of them delegated by God
for high purposes, and both of them
prophets. Yet thus distinguished, they
were never styled the sons of God. **SON**
OF GOD, was the reserved appellation of a
superior character : but what character
could be superior to both these, but
something supra-human or divine ? That
other expression, *I will settle him IN MY
HOUSE*, seems to bear an allusion to that
particular holiness of character, which
should distinguish the Messiah : and
which, in the preceding quotation, was
noted by the office of an everlasting
priesthood.

Behold, saith Isaiah, the prophet from
whom I have extracted most of the pre-
ceding quotations, and whose predic-
tions, though confessedly delivered seven
or eight hundred years before the ap-
pearance of Christ, are more like a his-
tory

tory of his life, than a prophecy ; behold, *a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes*, that is princes under him, his ministers, *shall rule in judgment*. Jeremiah in still stronger colours characterises the Messiah : *and this is his name, faith he, whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. The word is, Jehovah our righteousness : He, in whose exalted merits shall be our righteousness ; He, in whom we look for salvation : a salvation not placed in his conquests, in his military prowess and exploits of valour, but in his righteousness, holiness, equity, in all those virtues calculated to raise the mind, and fit it for universal bliss and endless happiness.

And is this the character, destined by a series of martial exploits to obtain the sovereignty of the world ; and by His prowess hold that subject world in awe ? Are those the means calculated to establish an universal monarchy ; and to crush the vigorous exertions of rival and contending

SERMON tending powers? Let the nation of Israel question itself; whether holiness, righteousness, equity, and judgment, were the means, by which it established even its narrow dominion in Palestine. Ask them whether they did not wade through blood, through havock, and devastation, to that establishment; which they effected, under their puissant heaven-favoured chiefs and princes, Moses, Joshua, David, and others. The object, the important object, we acknowledge, justified every step they took: an object, of all that can concern mankind, the greatest: the conservation of the knowledge of God; and, from thence derived, a sense of the love we owe Him, of the reverence with which we ought to regard Him, of the service we are bound to pay Him.

Let them dispassionately search their own scriptures, and enquire whether they do not uniformly represent the dominion of the Messiah, as founded, and consisting

consisting in righteousness: whether they do not character His glory, in a stile superior to that of earthly grandeur; His *kingdom, as not of this world.* It may indeed appear strange, that those, who should seem most interested in what their prophets had declared, and whom one might conceive possessed of the greatest helps to understand them; that those, to whom the glad tidings were first sent, should stop their ears against them. But giving something to prejudice, and much to self-interest, for they had learned to expect present honour and advantage, we may in some measure account for that obstinacy; which shut up their hearts against every impression of truth. And when we hear their own prophets, in words inspired by God himself, declaring; *hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not: the heart of this people is fat, and their ears heavy, and they shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart,* and

SERMON
VII.

SERMON and convert and be healed: the effect is
VII. explained; and their predicted mistake
of the Messiah affords an additional ar-
gument to us, of the truth of His mis-
sion: which so pointedly meets the de-
scription of their prophets; and with
the added particular of their own rejec-
tion of Him.

From the preceding reflections I will
offer only one short inference, the infe-
rence of the great Apostle to the Gen-
tiles, drawn from similar reasoning:
*wherefore if God spared not the natural
branches, take heed lest He spare not thee.*
If the Jews, with eyes so blinded, and
hearts hardened against the voice of
truth, victims to invincible obstinacy,
and inveterate prejudices, experienced
such a series of evils, as in no other nati-
onal instance ever marked a devoted peo-
ple: let us profit by their example; and
not by a similar conduct draw down upon
ourselves similar, or greater, evils: let us
not, through love of pleasure and dissi-
pation,

pation, neglect to know and to understand the sacred records of our religion ; nor through vanity, and the little catchings at admiration, by daring to do, what really wise, and truly good men, would not do, affect to treat them with scorn. Let not the contemptuous air of irony and ridicule, nor any other motive whatever, divert us from studying, and from professing to study those volumes ; on which a Newton, a Locke, and a Boyle were not ashamed to employ their great abilities, and valuable time. If any learning be worth pursuing ; it is that, on which the interests of another world depend. *Search the scriptures ; for in them are the words of eternal life.* And the farther we search them, of this truth we shall be the more convinced ; and conviction will add new incitement to our labours : and the more we study, and the better we understand, the more we shall learn to value, them.

SERMON
VII.

S E R-

S E R M O N V I I I .

Matt. xxii. 42.

*What think ye of Christ ?*SERMON
VIII.

UNDER this general subject, the questions discussed in my last discourse were, first whether the general expectation of a Messiah was founded in reason and truth : and secondly, whether that Son of Promise, destined to visit and redeem Israel, was to be a mere mortal, an illustrious prince and conquerour, or something greater ; of nature supra-human, and divine. And in this latter investigation I referred to the prophecies of the old Testament ; which the Jews were found most wretchedly to have mistaken, and misrepresented : and, in consequence

consequence of such misinterpretations, SERMON
VIII. to have rejected a saviour, and with silly expectation looked forward to a conqueror. Misjudging nation ! Was it for this, that Jehovah led you forth from the land of affliction ; and by a train of splendid miracles conducted you through the pathless sea, and waste wilderness, to your promised inheritance ? Was it for this the light of prophecy shone forth ; beaming blessings on mankind, and proclaiming a new æra of happiness to the world ? Had those prophecies no farther aspect, than to conquest and extended dominion ; to private ambition and public injury ? Wretched politicians ! Or ye would have known ; a warlike prince, such as your narrow prejudices figured your Messiah, though conquest like a slave seem chained to his triumphal car, is the greatest scourge an oppressed nation can experience. Did increased extent of public territory ever produce an increase of private happiness : or is it not notoriously otherwise ? Be that as it

P

may :

SERMON may : the Jews in general entertained
VII. no other idea of their Messiah, than that
which worldly splendor suggested ; the
range of greatness and power.

And there is a sect of Christians also, that hold doctrines much the same : if indeed those are to be called Christians, who regard Christ with scarcely more reverence, than even the Mahometans themselves ; who deny to him every character of divinity, and every degree of distinction, above Peter, James, and the rest of his followers, except that of master and disciple. " It is evident, ' say they,' that the Jews themselves " expected nothing more than a mere " man for their Messiah." And then is commonly cited in proof of it this prophecy of Moses : *a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren, LIKE UNTO ME.* And this likeness they conclude to consist in dignity of character, rank, and nature : whereas the expression alludes to the

the office only ; and the true and literal ^{SERMON} translation of the original is, “ a prophet not like unto me, but as I am ~~as~~^{VIII.} ~~as~~, one who shall sustain the prophetic office, as I do, *shall the Lord God raise up unto you, from among your brethren.* And if instead of a loose translation, the original had been consulted ; it would have precluded such ground of Socinian ~~civil~~.

With regard to the general assertion, that “ the Jews expected nothing more than a mere man for their Messiah ;” it is very readily acknowledged : and the conclusion follows ; that as they were charged by their own prophets, with having mistaken the scriptures ; and that charge was renewed against them by our Saviour ; their opinion is no proof of the truth of the doctrine they entertained. On the other hand,

* See Priestley on the Influence of Philosophy on Christianity. p, 310.

SERMON if it appear from the scriptures of the
VIII. new Testament, that Christ is there re-
presented as something more than mere
man ; the contrary opinion of the Jews
tends to confirm the apparent doctrine
of the new Testament, and to fulfil the
prophecies of the old. To this investi-
gation, then let us now proceed, and
enquire into the nature and character of
Messiah the Christ, as the scriptures of
the new Testament represent him ; with
one previous observation : which is,
that some line is to be drawn, according
to which we must admit, or reject, figu-
rative constructions. And the proper rule
of admittance I conceive to be, when
the literal one implies a contradiction to
reason ; or to other clear, direct, and
positive texts of scripture. For if, as
fancy prevails, figurative meanings be
arbitrarily assigned ; the doctrines of the
new Testament could not be considered
as a general rule of faith or practice :
but must be liable, as whim and imagi-
nation

nation led, by every fanciful reader to be frittered away.

SERMON
VIII.

The method, I propose in the sequel to pursue, is ; first, to enquire what is the general scope and tenor, which the scriptures of the new Testament, on the subject of our present investigation purport and propose : and secondly, to meet the objections to Christ's pre-existence and divinity, in the full force in which certain readers of a revived sect have pressed them.

I. To begin with the birth of Christ, which the histories of the Evangelists, Matthew and Luke, declare to have been in an eminent manner supernatural, we find him introduced into the world without a human father ; and therein charactered with a plain mark of individuation, which discriminates him from all other men, and places him above the rank of human beings. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the*

SERMON highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also
VIII. that holy thing, διο καὶ τὸ γεννωμένον αὐγόν, not
βρέφος, not that holy infant, child, or son ;
but that holy thing, or being, which
shall be born of thee, shall be called the
Son of God. Derived from a source thus
divine, the production must necessarily
partake of its divine origin : he was
accordingly *called*, that is, he *was*, in
a peculiar manner *was*, *the Son of God*.
Look through nature, and observe if we
have not as plain and powerful an argu-
ment in support of this doctrine, as
analogy can afford. The Evangelist
John also, in his account of the origin
of Christ, as plainly as words can ex-
press a meaning, asserts his divinity, and
also his pre-existence : declaring that he
was with God in the beginning ; and that
by his instrumentality all things *were*
made. This could not be affirmed of
a mere man : and that this proœmium
of St. John's Gospel did refer to Christ,
it

it would lead me too far from my present SERMON
subject to go about to prove.*

VIII.

Agreeable to such divine origin is the next account we have of him, when the Holy Ghost in a bodily form descended on him ; and a voice from Heaven pronounced him to be the *beloved Son of God*. And uniformly and consistently with the cœlestial declaration, when there is occasion to specify his nature, and testify who he really is, he both styles himself, and is acknowledged by his disciples as, **THE SON OF GOD**. The condition addressed to the Ethiopian eunuch, previous to his baptism, was, *if thou believest*. His answer evinces the extent of the implied question : *I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.* + Adam it is true was also styled the Son of God :

* See "Free Examination of the Socinian Exposition
" of the prefatory verses of St. John's Gospel."
Printed for W: Flexney.

+ See Sermon I.

SERMON VIII.
because God was his immediate author. But Christ, notwithstanding Adam's priority in the flesh, is styled *οὐνος πρωτοτοχος*. A distinction this not without a difference, and the difference is plain: Adam was created by God, a mere human creature; and, being produced without father or mother, was therefore styled in the genealogical account of Christ, the Son of God. But the difference of Christ's procedure from God, is marked by the strong term *τοκος*, begotten: a term plainly expressive of a communication of nature.

In the account of the transaction at the wedding at Cana, there is in the answer of our Lord to his mother something very declarative of a superiority of nature, above what appearances might challenge. *Woman*, not mother; *what concern have you with me?* What influence do you claim over me: to what dependence on you am I subject? And much to the same purpose we find him continually

continually expressing himself, on any ^{SERMON}
claims of earthly kindred. When, arguing with the ^{VIII.} ~~doctors~~ in the synagogue, it was told him ; that his *mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him*, he answered, *who is my mother ; and who are my brethren ? And stretching forth his hands to his disciples, he said ; behold my mother, and my brethren !* The passage, connected with other reflections, that had at different times occasionally dropped from him, may in some such terms as the following be paraphrased.

“ Whatever appearances may speak me :
“ earthly connections have I none. I
“ am a stranger in this world ; without
“ a home, or residence in it, where I
“ may lay my head ; without one natural relative, to engage me with the
“ tender tie of affection ; without
“ other business here, than that which
“ I received in commission from above.”

Thus also on his mother’s expostulation with him on another occasion ; *thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing* : his answer

SERMON answer is similar and uniform. *Why is*
VIII. *it, that ye sought me?* And then, indirectly declaring Joseph not to be his father, he adds ; *have ye not known, are ye yet to learn, that I must be about MY FATHER's busines* : that I am now acting in my proper sphere, that I am now about my real father's busines, that I must be employed as I am ?

No mere man, no prophet ever assumed the power of forgiving sins : the forgiveness of sins was universally held to be the prerogative of God alone ; and therefore when our Lord exercised that authority, the Scribes we find accusing him of blasphemy.* Hence then it follows, that arrogating to himself a power, which did not belong to man, he either assumed a greater authority than he had a right to exercise ; or that he was supra-human, and therefore took upon him no higher power than what strictly belonged to him.

* Matt: ix. 3.

When

When it is said, Matt : xi. 27. that ~~SERMON~~
no one knoweth the father, except the son : VIII.
it is very clear, that the nature of the father is intended. And in the same verse when it is declared, that *no one knoweth the son, but the father* ; the context shews, that the nature also of the son is alluded to. For as to his office, many knew him to be the Meffiah ; and acknowledged him as such. But the knowledge, here implied, appears to be of a very different and superior kind : a knowledge delivered immediately by the father ; a knowledge, which man did not possess, for even his disciples do not appear to have been compleatly acquainted with it, till after his resurection ; even the knowledge of his eternal power and godhead. *All things are delivered to me of my father : and no man knoweth the son, but the father.*

After our Lord had silenced the Saducees, on the subject of a resurrecation ; the Pharisees we are told entered into controversy

SERMON controversy with him: to whom He VIII. proposed the question in my text. They in reply returned him the usual answer: on which he pressed them with the prophetic declaration of David; *the Lord said unto MY Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.* And he then argues on the words with such force; that if he did not effect the conviction of his hearers, he at least left them without the power of reply. We might risk the issue of the present controversy on this single passage: so decisive is it in point. The scope of it appears too plain to be mistaken: I will therefore only enlarge on the words, and leave it to the most determined opponent of Christ's divinity, to find a different meaning.

Our Lord's general question was,
“what think ye of the Messiah?”—
“We consider him, answer the Pharisees, as an illustrious prince descended
“from that glorious king of Israel Da-
“vid.”—

“ And

“ And nothing more, rejoins our Lord, SERMON
“ than a great man, an illustrious VIII.
“ prince ?”—The reply is, “ no.” “ If
“ that were the case then, saith our
“ Lord ;” with what propriety could
that great and glorious monarch, the
greatest that ever filled the throne of
Israel, in the spirit of prophecy declare
of him, declare of any mere human be-
ing, however exalted in rank, or blazon-
ed with victories, “ that he was HIS
“ Lord : and that Jehovah would seat
“ him on his right hand ?” Consider
the just degree of profound reverence,
with which the Jews contemplated Je-
hovah, whose adorable perfections no
epithet will suit ; whose name, except
on the most solemn occasions, they fear-
ed to pronounce, and never heard it
without a reverential bow : and the force
of our Lord’s argument applies with
irresistible power ; in demonstrating that
the Messiah must be by nature superior
to David, something more than man.
And if we be asked what effect this ar-
gument

SERMON ence here on earth I enjoyed glory
VIII. with my father, who is in heaven: great prophet as he is, of course he is very inferior to me. In support of this exposition I will only add, that the common glosses on the passage give no pertinency to the last clause; nor do they obviate an apparent falsity in the clause preceding: for if Christ had not considered himself, of a nature and dignity superior to that of a mere prophet, he must at least have excepted himself as a much greater prophet than John.

If from the evangelical histories of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we proceed to that of John; the scope and tenor of his gospel we shall find still more clearly declarative of the divinity and pre-existence of Christ. To inculcate that doctrine, appears to have been the particular design of it. The prefatory verses of that gospel, as hath been already intimated, are full in point; and seem to have been directly levelled at the opposite error.

error. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.* And, as if to enforce a doctrine that had by some been questioned; he repeats it: *οὐτος*, this very word, *was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, that was made. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* And this doctrine, adds the Evangelist, was confirmed by John the Baptist; who allowed him preference in honour, in consequence of such his priority of existence: *He was preferred above me, for he was before me.*

No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which was in heaven. For the exposition of this verse, observe the context: for scripture is best explained by scripture. *Verily, verily, saith our Lord, we speak that we do know, and tes-*

John iii. 13.

Q

tify

SERMON VIII. *tify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things. No man ever ascended up to heaven, and there received in an enlarged mind the communication of divine knowledge: except him who came down from heaven, to whom alone that knowledge was communicated, even him, who had his first existence in heaven.* The force of this passage cannot be better ascertained, than by the figment fabricated by Socinus to elude it: who supposed Christ to have taken a journey to heaven after his baptism; and afterwards to have returned to the earth, and entered upon his ministry.*

The Baptist in direct words testifies in acknowledgment of Christ's superiority, that *He came from above*: and then, as

* Οὐν εὐ τῷ σπαν. The participle present here, as in various other passages, has the signification of an imperfect.

it were in explanation of the term he had made use of, by the word *ανωθεν* SERMON VIII.
from above, he instructs his hearers, that he meant *heaven*. *He, that cometh from above, is above all: he, that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He, that cometh from heaven, is above all.*

And in this declaration of our Lord, *I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me*; he plainly assumes the doctrine of his having descended from heaven, as a truth, to which that full assent, he had repeatedly demanded, he supposed was implicitly paid: and declares his motive for such an humiliation to have been obedience to his father's will; and his design, a full determination in every article to pursue it. And in a few verses distant distinguishing himself, by the particular communication he had enjoyed with the father in heaven, as alone competent to know and teach the perfect will of God, he adds; *it is indeed*

SERMON written in the prophets, that all men shall
VIII. be taught of God: not that any man hath
seen the father, save he which is of God,
he hath seen the father; he is inti-
mately acquainted with the nature and
essence of God, he alone exactly knows
his will, and deep designs, his hidden
counsels, secret, and unfathomable by
the human mind.

This doctrine of Christ's divine na-
ture and pre-existent state appears to
have given offence to some of his follow-
ers: which however we find him very
far from retracting, or explaining away.
On the contrary, with an indignant re-
proof he adds, *does this offend you?*
And then perseveringly maintaining the
doctrine, he had clearly asserted, he
foretels his future ascension to those
mansions, he had formerly left: and
asks them, if such an appeal to their
senses would satisfy their doubts; *what
and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend
up, where he was before?*

His

His superiority of nature, in a chapter SERMON
or two following, is in terms the most
unequivocal again asserted : *ye are from
beneath, I am from above; ye are of this
world, I am not of this world:* and (as the
chain of subsequent reasoning supplies)
if you will not believe this account of
myself, which I have so expressly and
repeatedly declared ; *ye shall die in your
sins.* *Then said they unto him, who art
thou?* To which question, expressive of
the most invincible obstinacy on their
part, he made them no other reply than,
*the very same, that I said unto you from the
beginning,* that I have constantly and uni-
formly declared myself ; the Son of
God, that came down from heaven to do
my father's will, and redeem you from
your sins : which great truth ye will not
believe, and must therefore die in your
sins. This passage evidently declares
the reason, why they should die in
their sins ; because they did not believe
him to be the Son of God, and to
have come down from heaven, to do his

SERMON father's will, and to redeem them from
VIII. their sins. And if their disbelief in that
article was a sin ; the doctrine, in which
they were so urgently required to be-
lieve, was a truth.

Towards the close of the same chapter, we find the same doctrine again insisted on ; and in terms so express, that his hearers, though they would not believe him, appear by their rude proceedings to have perfectly understood his meaning : for irritated at the claim of divinity, which he arrogated, *they took up stones to cast at him.* The offensive declaration was a direct assertion of his pre-existence : *before Abraham was, I am.*

In a conversation with his disciples, the plain scope of which was to prepare them for his departure, and console them under their loss, he tells them that in this world he counted not his origin, nor was the condition he had here assumed
his

his true and proper station ; and that, in ^{SERMON} removing hence, he was only going to ^{VIII.} the place of exalted happiness and glory, which in coming hither he had so lately left. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the father.* * The antitheses evince the literal meaning of the above passage beyond a doubt. The world he was going to leave, was the very same world into which he a little before had come ; and the world, or state of existence, with the father, into which he was going to remove, was the world, or state of existence with the father, which, when he came to visit this world, he had left. This the Disciples, to whom the words were particularly addressed, understood to be so clear and intelligible ; that they immediately observed, *lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable.*

* John xvi. 28.

SERMON
VIII.

I will close this general examination of the histories of our Lord's life with a passage in that remarkable prayer, immediately preceding his apprehension ; which throughout speaks the heart, and mind, and design, and interest of an inhabitant of another world, a stranger and sojourner here. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* These words plainly declare his pre-existence, and his pre-existence also in a state of glory ; with the avowed consciousness of the glories of that his pre-existent condition. And as the generality of readers, I will say farther from the perspicuity of the passage, every impartial and unprejudiced reader, must so understand the import of the words : it follows, either that the declaration is calculated to deceive, or that it is absolutely true ; either that Jesus arrogated in it a degree of pre-eminence, to which he had no claim, or that

that he was of a nature supra-human, SERMON
pre-existent, and divine. VIII.

After his resurrection he was constantly and uniformly preached by his apostles, as a superior being ; not a separated soul in hades, nor a drowsy soul sleeping away a long period of existence in the grave : but as enjoying glory with God, that state of glory he had affirmed to have enjoyed with Him before his humiliation on earth. And the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, doth in the plainest language confirm the doctrine of his pre-existence ; and, in that pre-existent state, of his instrumentality in the creation of the world *For in him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created through him and for him.** And I the rather cite this pas-

* Col. i. 16. and 17.

SERMON sage, as it forms a kind of comment; **VIII.** explaining, and confirming a similar assertion in St. John's Gospel in its primary and literal acceptation. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

On these words of the Evangelist Socinus remarks, that “ the words, *all things*, are not to be admitted in so general a sense as is commonly supposed, denoting the original formation of the world.” — “ They are not to be taken, ‘ continues he,’ in their primary sense, as if referable to the material world ; but are to be applied to the publication and reception of the gospel : as if John had said, all these spiritual and divine transactions, which are seen among us in the world, are derived from no other source than the preaching of the gospel of Jesus

* John i. 3.

“ Christ ;

“ Christ ; and were effected by his influence and power.”

SERMON
VIII.

That such interpretation of the words of the Evangelist is as false, as it is forced, foreign, and jejune, the preceding passage cited from St. Paul demonstrates. It doth most clearly ascertain the literal interpretation of the passage in the Evangelist, and enforce the truth of it : evincing that the words could not be used in that figurative sense, Socinus hath affixed to them ; nor referred to moral habits, and spiritual improvements. Things *in heaven*, as well as *on earth*, *invisible*, as well as *visible*, *whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers*, refer to a more extensive creation, than that of new moral habits, a reformation of manners in this world ; and disprove the idea of restriction to this world, or any thing solely connected with it.

The general scope and uniform tenor of the scriptures of the new Testament,
respecting

SERMON respecting the doctrine of Christ's divinity and pre-existence, having thus endeavoured to evince ; I proceed, as was proposed in the second place, to obviate some objections, that by certain writers of the present day have been advanced against it.

II. One objection to this doctrine is founded on the appellative man, in some passages of the new Testament applied to our Lord : as in *Acts ii. 22. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you* : and again, *He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man, whom He hath ordained.* *Acts, xvii. 31.* And to these passages, from the Epistle of Paul to Timothy, I will add another ; *there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus* : remarking on this last passage, that the idea of a mere man being delegated to the high and important office of mediator between God and man, that is, between God and himself, is less agreeable

able to reason, than the doctrine of a **SERMON**
superior and divine existence, by inheritance **VIII.**
so claiming, or so ordained.

Respecting the general application of the denominative **MAN** to Christ, we know that the Evangelist John says, he *was made*, or became, *man*: and as such, he is in scripture frequently styled **MAN**. But who is he, that St. John declares was made, or became, this individual man? Even that Divine Being, that existed with the father from the beginning. Acknowledging therefore with the Evangelist, that he was man; why are we not to believe the same Evangelist, who in subsequent words assures us, he was, prior to such state of humiliation, existent with the father? *He was made flesh*: and how is he, who hath shrined his divinity in the veil of manhood, to be otherwise denominated, than as man? Such humiliation of himself, while fashioned in the form and figure of a man, whatever degree of divinity he might under

SERMON under that shade possess, would in historical detail characterise him as a man.

Thus, Gen. 18. the three angels, one of whom is styled the Lord, that is the immediate messenger or angel of the Lord, appearing in the form and substance of men, are styled men. And, in the next chapter, of the angels, that in the assumed shape of men visited Lot, it is said ; *and the men put forth their hands, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door.* Gen. 32. *A man* is said to have wrestled with Jacob : yet that man we learn was no other, than the angel of the Lord. *For Jacob called the name of that place Penuel ; because he had there seen God face to face.*

A second objection to this doctrine is urged in terms to the following purport.

“ If a divine being, ‘ in the instance of Christ,’ had really animated a human body ; it must have appeared in the course of his history, that such an extraordinary measure was necessary.”

Now

Now I really see not the necessity of the ~~SERMON~~
consequence inferred. If the fact really ~~SERMON~~
were so, I conclude it expedient and
necessary, that it should be so ; without
seeing such necessity in terms asserted.
However it happens, for the satisfaction
of the objector ; that the necessity is
absolutely declared : though he has been
so unfortunate, as to overlook the decla-
ration. *Him God raised up, having loosed
the pains of death, because it was not possible
he should be holden of it.* Acts ii. 24.
But if mere man, why not possible ?
The absolute impossibility therefore be-
ing thus asserted, according to this wri-
ter's requisition, by his own argument
proves our Lord's divinity.

It is further objected against Christ's
divinity, that his apostles are frequently
represented as on a level with himself ;
and that many passages of scripture ex-
pressly say, they will be advanced to si-
milar, if not equal honour. Unfortu-
nately however for the bold assertor of
this

SERMON this extraordinary remark, the very passages, adduced by him in proof of such **VIII.** equality, militate directly against it. Such are the following : *That they may be one ; as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us. — And the glory, which thou gavest me, I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou has sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* The import of the petition is, “ that “ closely connected as he was with the “ father in love and obedience, so his “ disciples might be in love and obedi-“ ence to the father and him.” The nature of the unity implied is further explained, in the subsequent clause *that they may be perfect εἰς ἕν, unto one thing ;* “ that they may unite in design and “ operation to that one great end, the “ redemption of mankind.” And so far from declaring his disciples on a level with himself, the words imply a marked

marked inferiority to him : in as much SERMON
as he, who gives glory, is superior to VIII.
him, to whom he gives it. The glory,
here spoken of, is the power of working
miracles ; a power, which as the father
had given him, he had exercised a simi-
lar authority, and given to his disciples,
in testimony to the world, that he had
received his commission from the father ;
and in proof that the father, in permit-
ting that power to be delegated to them,
had loved them, not in the same degree,
but *καθώς*, as, even as, manifestly as, *thou*
hast loved me.

“ Other parts of this remarkable
“ prayer, ‘ adds the author,’ are in the
“ same strain.” For the satisfaction of
my audience I will subjoin some of
those parts alluded to, *I have given unto*
them the words, which thou gavest to me:
and they have received them, and have
known surely, that I came out from thee, and
they believed that thou hast sent me. In
this ejaculation how does our Lord here

R

charac-

SERMON characterise his disciples ? Not as immediately coming themselves from God ; but as acknowledging him the immediate delegate of God, and knowing that he was so. Here is a manifest distinction observed between them : A distinction wide as the different degree of honour, in being the immediate delegate of God, come from the presence and a participation of the glory of the father, to reveal his will to men ; and one of those, to whom such revelation was made, and who acknowledged it : a distinction obvious as the difference implied in receiving a kingdom, and being appointed to employes of honour in that kingdom under him, who received it.

1. Cor. 15. 24. Christ's kingdom is said to have an end : and from thence an argument is formed against his pre-existence. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also*

also himself be subject unto him, that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. " This, ' says the objector,' " is what we should hardly have expected, if Christ had been the first of " all created Beings : by whom all " things were made, and who upholds " and governs all things." It is sufficient to draw up this argument in form, to expose the weakness of it. " If " Christ existed from the beginning, of " his kingdom there could be no end. " But the scriptures assure us, that of " Christ's kingdom there will be an " end : therefore he could not have existed from the beginning." How the termination of Christ's kingdom, erected on the redemption of mankind, should depend on the date of his first existence, it is not easy to conceive. When the œconomy of that redemption shall be completed, and Christ's mediatorial kingdom of course cease : by no rule of reasoning doth it follow, that Christ shall not continue to exist, accompanied with

SERMON every appendage of universal sovereignty, in the plenary enjoyment of an eternal weight of Glory.

In proof of Christ's absolute and real humanity another argument is founded on a passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, which in our translation runs thus. *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.* Heb. 2. 9. The original is, Τον δὲ Κραχυ τι παρ' αγγελους ηλαττωμενον Ελεπομεν Ιησουν, δια το παθημα του θανατου: and the literal translation, *for we see Jesus, who was for a little time lessened below the angels, for, or by, or on account of the suffering of death,* The word ηλαττωμενον is very significant of his pre-existence, and in a superior state. And the passage not only proves, that, previous to his present humiliation, he did exist in a superior state; but in some measure ascertains the degree of superiority he possessed, viz. a state of nature above the angelic.

It

It also evinces the particular, in which SERMON
he was lessened : not by any privation
of his divinity, but in being subjected
to the suffering of death, the angels
enjoying a blessed immortality.

To the supposition of Christ having
existed in a prior state and superior
station it is objected, that St. Luke men-
tions in him an *increase of wisdom and*
stature : which, on such supposition, the
objector finds a difficulty in reconciling
to his idea. There may be a difficulty ;
but it is certainly such as implies no
impossibility. Let us therefore hear
what scripture says in explanation of
it.

The apostle to the Philipians ch. ii.
v. 6. observes of Christ, that *εν μορφῃ*
Θεου υπαρχων, εαυτον εκενωσεν, μορφην θουλε λαβων.
The word *μορφη* signifies not only the
external form or surface ; but often the
whole substance, and essential nature.
And such is plainly the import of it in

SERMON VIII. the passage before us : the word in any other sense being unapplicable to God.

According to this interpretation then of the word *μορφή*, the meaning of the passage is obvious : “ who, when he was “ of divine nature and essence, emptied “ himself, that is, divested himself of “ his glory, taking the nature of a ser- “ vant.

Let us next examine, how this passage of St. Paul corresponds with what the evangelist John hath said on the same subject : for scripture is the best comment on scripture. John i. 1. Ο λογος ήν προς τον Θεον, καὶ Θεος ήν ο λογος. — καὶ ο λογος σαρξ εγενετο. *The word, that was with God, and that was God, was made, or became, flesh.*

Now if the logos, which the Evangelist says *was God*, and the Apostle affirms to have been *of the nature and essence of God*, according to that Evangelist became, or *was made flesh*, and according to

to the Apostle took the nature of man : SERMON
he took with it all the infirmities and VIII.
affections of human nature ; and must
necessarily have experienced the im-
bility of infancy, and with maturing age
an increase of the powers of body and
mind.

If it be questioned, in the language of Christ's sceptical visitor, *how these things can be* ; how such an absolute conversion of the logos into manhood could be effected : with humble diffidence in our own capacity, let us ingenuously acknowledge we cannot explain it. But it hath been proved to be expressly asserted : and where the assertion implies no impossibility, I may on sufficient authority believe a fact, though I can neither explain, nor account for it. I have the assurance of an apostle, that *great is the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh* : as such I acknowledge it, without endeavouring to pry into secrets, perhaps known only to God himself ; and without presuming, with

SERMON ^{VIII.} the key of human knowledge, to lay open
that, which the spirit of God hath declared a mystery. Our present investigation is no farther concerned, than in proving it the doctrine of scripture. As such, other arguments, and another train of reasoning, will supply abundant proof that it is the doctrine of truth.

In vain presumption to fix the bounds, within which divinity may expose or conceal its nature, another argument against the divinity of Christ is urged from the improbability " of a man, who " died on the cross, having been the maker of the world." It is improbable too, that a Being, who, though in the appearance of man, was produced by the energetic influence of the holy spirit, and born without a human father ; who could penetrate into the hidden secrets of mens hearts, who could control or suspend the powers of nature, bid the sea be still, and be obeyed, and by divesting himself of gravity, or giving a temporary solidity to

to the water, walk upon the swelling ^{SERMON} ~~VIII.~~ surge ; who could exercise even a creative power, in feeding several thousand people on some morsels, in themselves insufficient to satisfy a few individuals ; and lastly who, having died on a cross, after his burial revived, and in embodied form and substance exercised all the functions of life, for the space of forty days conversed freely with his friends, and after that ascended openly before them into heaven ; it is improbable, that he, who was possest of such powers as those, should be that weak, impotent, limited being, a mere and absolute man.

I will mention only one objection more : which is founded on the argument from analogy. From the assumed denial of the pre-existence of human souls, it is inferred that the soul of Christ could not have pre-existed : analogy requiring, “ that the whole human species be upon one footing, in a case, which so very nearly concerns the first and ~~the~~ ^{“ consti-}

SERMON " constituent principles of their nature."

VIII. It is freely confessed, that no argument can be produced in proof of the pre-existence of human souls : and on the other hand it is equally clear, that no argument of weight can be advanced against the doctrine, except the want of consciousness : a defect, as hath been already observed, * from which the superior nature and mind of Christ were free.

As to the pre-existence of human souls, notwithstanding the many ingenious conjectures, that have been urged in support of it, conceding to this writer his full postulatum of its being a false and erroneous doctrine ; no argument can be framed from the analogy of human nature to that of Christ. The difference of Christ's nature from that of mere man, is the great point in controversy : and to build an argument on the sup-

* See page 248.

posed equality of them, is begging the ~~SERMO:~~
question. What equality of nature is ~~VIII.~~
there in a mere man, and him, who was
produced by the efficiency of the holy
spirit, without a human father ; between
him, whose feeble powers are contained
within narrow limits, and controled by
positive laws, and him whose powers
seemed to know no bounds, and, instead
of submitting to, superseded the laws of
nature ; between him, whose body putri-
fies in the grave, and whose separated
soul exists where the common course of
mortality claims it, and him who tri-
umphant over death rose from the grave,
his soul not left in Hades, nor his body
subjected to corruption ? And in beings,
wherein subsists so little equality, no ar-
gument can be founded on a supposed
analogy : no, not even in the particular
case, with which the argument we are
now considering is qualified, “ in the
“ first and constituent principles of na-
“ ture.”

Such

SERMON
VIII.

Such are the principal objections, I have in modern writers * observed, to the doctrine of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ: and to the objections of modern authors, on every subject in the course of the preceding lectures discussed, I have particularly applied myself. And now in a few words to press on you the subject of those discourses, let me observe; that, if there be a God, who made, and preserved us, and who will take account of our conduct, there must be such a duty as religion; and that it is both a serious, and a necessary thing: so serious, and so necessary, that as its regards extend to eternity, eternal happiness or misery attend our right election of, and correspondent conduct in it. Freely investigate it: examine the volume, in which as with the finger of God I think, and have supposed, it written. Though it may contain some

* Dr. Priestley, Mr. Lindsey, &c.

things

things hard to be understood ; it holds SERMON
forth much, that if practiced will im-
prove our nature : enough so chearing
and intelligible, as to excite our endea-
vours to understand it more and more.
The doctrinal parts of religion are scien-
tific : and where is the science, that
hath not its mysteries ? The most de-
monstrable of all sciences, even mathe-
matics, has them.

Look through nature, as she lies
before you in the works of this our
world : and mystery meets the mind at
every step. And will you extend your
thoughts, beyond the confines of this
habitable globe, to God, and a world to
come ; and not expect to find some
mystery there ? Shall we reject as false
whatever we cannot comprehend ? To
how narrow a compass then shall we re-
duce truth ? Doth human reason rank
so high : or is God so level with the
capacity of mankind ? Shall we ques-
tion his declarations, because we cannot
accom-

SERMON accommodate to the size of our minds the
VIII. design and propriety of them? Shall we fastidiously refuse assent to what He hath been pleased to reveal; because He hath not revealed more? Or shall we not rather with due gratitude and humility acknowledge the goodness of God, who hath by the revelation of Jesus Christ revealed so much: who hath condescended to unveil the blaze of divine majesty in such degree, as to enable mankind acceptably to serve Him; and so far made known the nature of another world, as to quicken our exertions, amidst the various mansions there to attain to a station of bliss and glory, through the applied merits and mediation of the same Jesus Christ our Lord?

Such is the anchor of hope, we have in Christ: and such in sum and substance the doctrine, which in answer to the words of my text the scriptures dictate. It is not in the ability of man to mend

mend them * ; nor shall human devices prevail in refining them. In plain legible characters, *they contain the words, all the words, of eternal life.*

* See Lindsey's sequel to his apology page 119.



DE
STATU PARADISIACO.
CONCIO
IN ECCLESIA BEATÆ MARIAE
APUD OXONIENSES
HABITA.

Eccl. vii. 30.

Hoc tantum inveni ; quod Deus homines perfectos creavit, ipsi autem ratiocinia plurima invenerunt.

TERRARUM hic noster orbis, & **CONCIO**
quicquid in orbe viret, quicquid ultra **IX.**
hujusce mundi fines aut oculus assequi,
aut mens deprehendere possit, Deum
optimum maximum arguit : tanta sapi-
entia, tanta ubique patet Potentia. **O**
orbem fœlicem, summi artificis, omni-
bus absolutum numeris, opus ; cui herba

S quæque

CONCILIO ^{IX.} quæque levissima, cui quicquid avium
 pecudumque usquam invenitur, aut pulchritudinem aut usum suppetit! O hominum fœlicissimum genus; cui tot utilia, tot per pulchra serviunt! At longe aliter se res habet: tot tamque præclara et benevolentiae et sapientiae Dei argumenta malum multiforme inquinat. Morborum numerosa cohors, nec arte nec medicinâ depellenda, humana corpora obsidunt; animos pravi affectus deturpant: durâ adeo lege vivitur, ut *fœlicifimus ille, qui minus miser.*

Quo fonte derivata mala hæc, ut dicuntur, tam naturalia, quam moralia, vitam humanam miseriis ærumnisque obruerunt: quo pacto homines fœlicitate exciderunt, quos fœlicitatis perfruenda gratiâ in lucem evocavit Deus, et olim et nunc temporis variè contenditur. Hinc alii, quales sunt Manichæi, omnipotentiâ Dei denegatâ, dæmonem alterum potentem quidem, sed malesuadum et maleficum, fingunt: cui ordinis
 per-

perturbatio cordi est. Quocunque boni aut excogitavit, aut effecit Deus; ut hoc inquiet, illud ut missum faciat, hic malorum opifex pro viribus usque labrat: et artis chymicæ ratione quasi inversâ, ut ex optimo quoque malum erat, huic labor atque opus est.

CONCIO
IX.

Alii potentiam Dei summam esse agnoscant, providentiam ejus omnino tollunt. Deum talem designant, cuius maiestati rerum humanarum moderamen ne minime conveniret; cuius foelicitas ne perfecta et continuata fieret, hujusmodi curæ quam maxime obstant: naturæ divinæ aestimatores pravi, quippe qui, uti de Epicureis testatur Cicero, * verbis relinquunt, re auferunt Deos; nihil curare eos nec sui, nec alieni, fingentes.

Ipsâ Dei existentiâ prorsus sublatâ, nodum alii audaciter resolvunt. Si Deus sit, sicut hi ratiocinantur, ab operibus suis cur malum haud procul amovit?

Vid. Cic. de Nat. Deor.

S 2

Aut

CONCIO Aut nequivit fane, aut noluit. Vel potestas ejus, vel benevolentia est finita : Ens vero, quoquo modo finitum, nequit esse vere et absolute Deus. Ratiocinio igitur si huic assentiamur, rerum hic lucidus ordo nullo moderamine certo geritur ; sed sors omnia versat.

Hisce variis de mali origine hypothesibus accedit altera ; quæ naturam humam ita esse comparatam affirmat, ut a malo separari et sejungi humanitatis sors omnino nequeat. Animis, hac veri specie delinitis, malum quasi de essentiâ hominis esse videtur; et crimina quæque misericordiâ potius, quam pœnâ digna putantur. Hinc, non me malum ! sed me miserum ! clamare quisque in promptu habet : hinc neminem confitentem habemus reum ; dum peccata quisque non sua deflet, sed quæ humana parum cavit natura. Hominum vero crimina in naturam humanam dum temere transferant ; ne in authorem naturæ culpa ad extremum recidat, isti parum carent philosophi.

Opi-

Opinionum, quas supra memoravimus, prioribus tribus jam prætermisſis, ad refellendam hanc posteriorem, quippe quæ neotericis quibusdam præcipue arri-det, sententiam potius accingor.

CONCIO
IX.

Hominum genus e creatoris summi manibus, adeo appetens mali, adeo impotens benè beatèque vivendi, adeo imperfectum evasisse fingunt hujuscē sententiæ propugnatores ; ut innocentia et fœlicitatis status nec fuerit unquam, nec fore poterit. Si vero Moſeos dē Statu Paradisiaco, atque autorum ethnicorum de ætate aureâ, scriptis quid veri insit ; philosophorum istorum hypothesis reipsâ refellitur : et, ratiocinii sui fundamine sublato, cassum ruit quodcunque super extruitur. Statum igitur naturæ innocentia et fœlicitatis esse statum, ac sorte tali beatum hominum genus olim floruisse, hac in concione contenditur : cuius tripliciter divisæ hæc norma servabitur.

CONCILIO

IX.

I. Quid de hominum conditione primâ mundi ætate, in sacris scripturis traditum accepimus, primò exponendum est.

II. Auctores profanos, tum poetas, tum philosophos, eadem suffragantes deinde proferam.

III. Hæc tandem dogmata de Statu Paradisiaco, ab antiquissimis scriptoribus tradita, rationi esse consentanea tertio comprobabitur.

I. Sermonis itaque hujuscce prædictam mihi servantì normam, quid de primigenâ hominum conditione, scriptura sacra tradit, primò investigandum est. Fabricationem *εξημερισμον* depingens Moses, * hæc refert;

* In istâ narratione quædam esse parabolica, nonnulli existimant: alii etiam sermonem totum exemplar artificiosum esse volunt ad res veras explicandas: nempe naturæ primæ statum Paradisiacum, & ejusdem degenerationem, necnon humani generis novitatem. Alii quasi historiam summâ fide dignam, narrationem totam sensu

refert ; “ Deus omnia, quæcumque fa- CONCIO
 “ bricaverat, aspexit ; et ecce omnia bo- IX.
 na :” omnia nempe ad assequendum fi-
 nem, cuius gratiâ creabantur, in se se fat
 potestatis habuerunt. Innocentiam pri-
 mœvam, et mali originem historicus idem
 divinus planè et enucleatè exponit. Porro
 ratio vitæ, quam parentes primi agebant,
 morum simplicitatem et securitatem, ab
 innocentia omnino ortam, hisce verbis
 tradita, luculenter designat. “ Ambo
 “ erant nudi Adam et uxor ipsius, neque
 “ illos pudebat*.” Naturam nempe du-
 cem et magistram secuti, nec labis ullius
 consciæ, nulla vestium involucra quære-
 bant ; neque iis vitio fuit nuditas, dum

sensu omnino ad literam expresso complectuntur. Expli-
 catio quænam fit verissima, hic loci non investigandum
 duco : talem, qualis contenditur, extitisse statum, de-
 generationem postea contigisse, sententia utriusque
 propugnatores pariter agnoscunt.

* Historici sacri sententiaæ isti hæc Platonis confera-
 tur. Τυπος δε και απτερωτοι θυραινουσι τα πολλα ει-
 μαρτια, το γαρ των αρνη αυτοις αλυκοι εκεραστο.

CONCIO imago Dei, formâ humanâ eluceffens,
 IX. peccato intaminata stetit.

Neque his solis clausulis Statûs Paradi-
 sci dogma innititur: scripturis sacris
 excerptæ, sententiae aliæ proferri possent,
 quæ creationis mundi historiam, sicut a
 Mose traditam accepimus, non solùm in-
 nuere, sed plane affirmare naturæ humanæ
 perfectionem, satis arguunt. Innocentiae
 et fœlicitatis primorum parentum fidem
 apud Judæos suminam valuisse hinc præ-
 cipue liquet; quod Apostoli de sorte istâ
 beatâ, traditionibus acceptâ, Mose lucu-
 lenter expositâ, prophetarum monitis
 munitâ, non obscurè, dubitanter, et
 quasi ambagibus, summâ vero cum fidu-
 ciâ, loquuntur: quippe quod pro certo
 usque habebatur. Sententias huc spec-
 tantes, in novo fœdere passim dispersas,
 ut plurimas omittam; hæc Pauli verba
 hujuscce dogmatis argumentum amplissi-
 mum præbent. “Sicut uno homine
 “ peccatum in mundum introivit, mors
 “ quoque peccati causâ, &c.” ac in
 codem

eodem capite paulum infra, “ sicut hominis unius inobedientiâ plurimi fiebant peccatores, &c.” Quibus ex clausulis Apostolum, ut satisfactionem Christi omnes complecti omnis ætatis homines probaret, fœlicitatis primæ jacturam non modo nudè et simplicitè affirmare constat; hoc vero ex dogmate, quasi re cognitâ et universim concessâ, ad alias probationes progreditur. Sed in re apertissimâ diutius cur immorandum? Tum fœlicitatem primævam, tum fœlicitatis istius jacturam, scriptura sacra si alibi usque taceret; ad utramque probandam prædictæ solæ clausulæ abunde sufficiunt, et quasi vim habent demonstrationis. Sententias ergo supra memoratas hæc, de quâ jam concionamur, claudat. “ Hoc tantum inveni, quod homines perfectos effinxit Deus; ipsi autem ratiocinia plurima invenerunt.”

CONCIO
IX.

Clausulis istis cæterisque plurimis, quæ, idem spectantes, in scripturis sacris inveniuntur, sibi invicem collatis; hæc dogmata

CONCIO dogmata summatim exinde sequi habentur.
 IX. Mundi origine primâ homines, uti alia singula sapientissimi et omnipotentis auctoris opera, perfecti creabantur. Appetitus singulos, ad fœlicitatem assequendam, ad promovendam virtutem unicè spectantes, et mutuo et amicè conspirantes, ratio gubernatrix administravit. Satis et ad fœlicitatem et ad virtutem valebant: dum hanc excolant, illâ fruuntur; hâc læsâ, illa amittitur. Libera benè beatè que vivendi datur potestas; nulla impunitur necessitas: cuique incoacta sua stetit voluntas. Minus morigeros denique se præbuerunt, imperium Dei repugnarunt, jussaque detrectarunt: Inobedientiæ suæ pænas luebant. Hinc malum oritur; et vires acquirens eundo, longè latèque ingruit. Hoc fonte derivata, glades omnigena ubique diffunditur; hinc, quicquid vitam humanam miseram aut insuavem reddit, quale quale insit amari, id totum accipit; serisque in nepotes defluens, contagii instar, naturam humanam commutasse

commutasse videtur; immo, si fas sit Concio
I
vera loqui, commutavit.

II. Sensu scripturæ sacræ de primâ hominum conditione ita breviter exposito; quid de eâdem autores profani conscripserunt, servato proposito, proximè investigandum est: rerum enim antiquissimorum, quæ in literis sacris continentur, historiam, apud omnes gentes, quamvis plerumque obscuram, remansisse constat. Cumque concionis nostræ norma clausulas ex scriptoribus ethnicis plures, quam in hujuscce generis scriptis commendat usus, proferri postule; apud hunc confessum me excusatum iri spero. A philosophis igitur ac historicis, quippe quæis major quam poetis fides habetur, initium sumendum duco. Quos inter præcipuus Plutarchus, philosophus idem et historicus, regionis cuiusdam, notis Paradiſi distinctæ, nomine insularum beatarum designatæ, descriptionem exhibet: cui orbis terrarum portiuncula omnino

Concio nino nulla nunc temporis convenit.*

IX. *Imbres, inquit ille, rari et amæni hic loci decidunt; dum venti molliter spirantes, et rore quasi alati, insulam per vagentur: quibus efficitur, ut studio et labore nullo eliciti, omnigenæ herbæ fructusque jucundissimi suaptè nascantur.* Descriptioni huic sententiam proxime sequentem historicus insuper addit. *+ Adeo ut fides usque ad barbaros perlata firma est, illic campos esse Elysios, et beatorum sedes quas Homerus decantavit.* Hinc de Paradiſo, sive beatorum sede quid sensit Plutarchus, quid etiam barbari sensere, liquet.

* Ομβρος δι χρυσιναις μετριοις σπανινης, τη δι πλιστης πτευματος μαλακοις, και δροσοβολεις, ου μονοι αρουν και φυτευει περιεχουσιν αγαθην και πιονα χυραν, αλλα και καιρους αυτοφυιν φερουσιν, αποχρωνται πληθεις και γλυκυτητεις βοσκειν αινι πονον και πειρυματινεις σχολεισθεται δεριον.

PLUT. in Vit. Sest.

† Οστι μεχρι την βαεβαρην διιχθαι πιστιν ισχυραι, αυτοθι πο φλισται ειναι πεδιον, και την των ειδεψιονιν οικησαι, τη Ομηρος υμητσεν. Ibid.

Eadem

Eadem fere, quæ de insulî fortunatis Plutarchus, de insulâ Toprobanâ afferit Diodorus Siculus: hoc insuper addito, nempe quod hujuscæ regionis incolæ expertem morborum vitam agebant. Nec prætermittendum duco, quod de morte Tobrobanitarum historicus idem tradit: utpote sententiam haud omnino isti dissimilem, quam scriptores quidam Christiani de morte, vel potius e vitâ exceffu, in statu paradisiaco si homines usque permanissent, statuere. *“ Duplex apud eos nascitur herba; cui si quis indormiat, crutat omnis et doloris expertem mors grata suavisque supervenit.” Sententia ista Diodori Mosaicæ arboris vitæ explicationem fortasse verissimam præbet; quippe qua ab origine narratio illa primitus derivatur. Mors, si historico sacro fidem habeamus, non humanitatis conditio, sed peccati pœna, plane constituta

Concio
IX.

* Φυιοθαι γαρ αυτοις διφυη βοτανη, εφ ης οτιν τις ποιηθη, λεληθοτως και απονας προς ουνον κατεπιχθεις αποδημει. Diod. Sic. lib. 2.

Concio fuit. Arbori vitæ igitur talem quid vœtat
 IX. inesse vim, qualis fructum ejus gustanti
 transitum facilem atque suavem ad im-
 mortalitatem conciliaret?

Paradisum quendam in Africâ situm
 Procopius fingit; fontibus amœnis irriga-
 tum, sylvis ornatum, viridantibus usque,
 quæque usque dulce redolebant: dum
 aerem tepentem frigiduli venti continuò
 mulcerent. Talem denique statum, qua-
 lis hac in concione contenditur, olim
 revera extitisse, non solos inter Hebræos,
 aut Ægyptos, aut Græcos fides valuit;
 in idem consentientes Indos quoque
 habemus: quos apud Calanus Alexan-
 drum magnum ita alloquens a Strabone
 inducitur.* “ Tritici hordeique olim

* Το παλαιον πατερ' η αλφιτων και αλευρων πληρη, καθαπτει
 και τυν κορεων και κρηνας δι' ερρεον, αι μεν ιδατος, γαλακτεος
 δι' αλλαι, και ομοιως αι μεν μελιτος, αι δι' οιου, τινες δι'
 αλαιουν υπο πληγμονης δι' οι ανθρωποι και τρυφης εις ιδριη εξε-
 πισον. Ζινς δε, μισησας την καταστασιν, ηφαντο παντα,
 και δια πονου του βιον απεδειξε. Strab. lib. 15.

“ erant,

“ erant, sicut nunc pulveris, omnia ple- CONCIO
 “ na ; fontes quoque, alii aquâ, lacte alii, IX.
 “ alii melle, alii vino, nonnulli oleo flue-
 “ bant : donec ob satietatem luxuriamque
 “ homines in contumeliam sese tradide-
 “ runt. Statum igitur præsentem Ju-
 “ piter exosus, omnia abolevit ; * vitam-
 “ que labore degendam instituit.” Nemo,
 ut opinor, hæc legens, quo ex fonte
 manarint, diu dubitabit.

Scriptoribus istis, regionem naturâ
 plane eandem, situ loci utcunque diver-
 sam, designantibus philosophum gravem
 et instar omnium Platonem jam tandem
 liceat mihi subjicere. In dialogo isto,
 cui titulus *Πολιτικος* adscribitur, quippe
 qui, proœmium veluti, libris sequentibus
 $\Pi\ddot{o}l\acute{e}t\acute{e}i\acute{a}s \kappa\alpha\iota\iota\mu\omega\nu$ præponitur, de origine
 politiæ philosophus fusè differit. Et re
 altè repetitâ, hominem a Deo creatum
 conditione primâ beatissimâ et verè aurea

* Vid. Genes. Cap. 2 Com. 19.

Concio potum esse docet. *Ætatis aureæ et IX.* fælicis descriptionem μυθον appellat; traditionem aliunde desumptam isto nomine designans: ne quis forsan pro figmento et somniis quasi φιλοσοφειτος narrationem habeat. Fidem ac authoritatem quam huic μυθῳ conciliatam vellet, hæc sua testantur verba.* “ Ista nobis tradiderunt primi “ illi majorum nostrorum, qui primam “ mundi revolutionem proxime contingebant. Horum sermonum testes præco-“ nesque illi extiterunt.” Platonice isti primævæ fœlicitatis tabellæ, coloribus adeo vividis depictæ, haud abs re erit paulò diutius immorari: in qua si veritatem ipsam non deprehendamus, veritatis saltem vestigia nemo fere non agnosceret. †“ Ætate ista, nihil erat ferum; “ neque

* Απειριημονευστο δ' οὐκε τῶν ημετερῶν προγονῶν τῶν πρωτῶν, οι τελευτῶν μεν τη προτερεσ περιφορες τοι εἶπες χρονος γρειτονοι, της δὲ κατ' αρχας εφυοτο. Τοιτων γαρ ουτοις κηρυκεις εγενούθ' ημιν των λογων. Plato Πολιτ:

† Τοτε ευκ αγειον ουδειν, ουτε αλληλων εδωδαι, πολεμος ευκ επην, ουδε ετασις τοπαραπατ. — Θεος εινεμεν αυτους, αυτος

" neque aliæ alias animantes votabant : **Concio**
 " aberat bellum penitus atque seditio. **IX.**
 " —Deus homines pascebatur ; ipse erat
 " et pastor eorum et custos : ipsoque
 " eos regente, civitatum constitutiones
 " nullæ extabant. —Fructus illis, et
 " porra et fruges, arbores et fertile solunt
 " sponte suâ subministrabant." De Sa-
 turni regno alia plurima philosophus
 idem scribit ; quæ statum paradisiacum
 quam verissime designant. Alia, ut ipse
 testatur, innumera, et illis longe mirabi-
 liora, ab ejusdem μυθῳ quasi fonte perma-
 nant : longinquitate vero temporis, par-
 tim sunt exoleta, partim dispersa atque
 dissipata perturbate dicuntur.

Descriptioni illi uberrimæ si quid am-
 plius deerit, quo Platonis sententia de
 hac re plenius enitesceret ; *Τιμαιος*, sive
 περὶ φυσεως dialogi, pars ista, in quâ de ho-
 minum creatione agitur, argumenta huc

ἐπιστατην. — Νημοντος δε εκείρου, πολιτειας ουκ ησαν. — Καρκονες
 δε αφθονοις ειχον απο τε δευτην και πολλης υλης αλλις, ουκ
 επιτη γενεγυιας φυσεων, αλλ' αυτοματης απεδιδουσις της
 γης. Plat. ibid.

T

spec-

CONCIO spectantia amplissima præbet ; ubi de
IX. mali causâ et origine argutè differitur.
Ex involucris tandem, quibus veritas fere
obruitur, hoc veri erui potest : homines
benè, justè, et honestè vixisse contendit-
ur, dum in semet impressam dei simili-
tudinem puram atque intaminatam con-
servarent ; malè vero, postquam cupidi-
tibus crassis et corporeis semet ipsos in-
volvissent.

Ab historicis et philosophis ad poetas
descendere, ac Homerum Elysios campos
depingentem in primis audire, erit operæ
pretiūm.

Vitæ hic humanæ ratio jucunda paratur ;
Nec fera tempestas, nec nigri nubilæ cæli
Inficiunt æthram, tranquillâ luce serenam :
Suaviter ait Zephyri spirantes arva salutant,
Et leviter stringunt recreata silentia ponti. *

Quid de hortis Alcinoi dicam ? Nonne
et hi et illi ab eodem fonte derivan-

* Τη περι επιστη βιοτη πελει αιθεωποιοι,
Ου μητοι, ουτ' αρχει μελων πολυς, ουτε ποτε ομερος.
Αλλ' αιει ζεφυροι λιγυνησιοντας αντας
Ωκηλοις αποσι αιαψυχειν αιθηπους.

tur ?

tur? Vana omnino fictaque cecinisse **Concio IX.**
poetam grex totus criticorum negat. —
Quó vero pictura illa amoëni, immo
amoënitatis, horti referenda est? Non,
ut iidem fingunt, ad insulas Atlanticas;
neque usquam regionum præter eam, ab
hominibus primis enarratam, a primis
scriptoribus depictam, præter Paradisum.

Genus hominum primigenorum de-
cantans, locum Homero proximum He-
siodus sibi vendicat; ejusdem, ut aliqui
volunt, ut alii, ætatis prioris scriptor.

Tunc homines divum vivebant more; neque illos
Anxia curarum moles, operumque labores
Lassabant: aberat morbus, tristisque Sene^{cus}.
Igneus ast ollis vigor; et dum corpore vires
Regnabant solido, convivia læta placebant.
Mors similis somno fuit, atque uberrima tellus
Omnia liberius nullo cogente ferebat
In commune bonum, nec quisquam invidit habenti. ♦

* Ωστε θεος δ' είρωντι ακηδίαι θυμοι εχόντες
Νοσφίου απειρτα πονοι και οίζυος· οὐδε τι δειλός

Nemo,

CONCIO
IX.
Nemo, ut opinor, scriptorum Christi-
anorum statum Paradisiacum plenius et
melius depinxit, quam in ipsis versibus
Hesiodus. Aetatem auream ab Ovidio
in libro primo metamorphosium expres-
sam, utpote omnibus notam, praetermit-
to. Neque de regno Saturnio tacet
Virgilius :

Ante jovem nulli subigebant arva coloni :
Nec signare quidem, aut partiri limite campum
Fas erat ; in medium querebant : ipsaque telus
Omnia liberius, nullo poscente, ferebat.

Ad calcem libri proxime sequentis scili-
cet secundi Georgicorum, hi versus idem
quoque spectant.

Ante etiam sceptrum Dictae regis, et ante
Impia quam cæsis gens est epulata iuvencis ;
Aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat.

Τηρεις επηρεας δι ποδας και χειρεις ομοιες
Τερπνοις ει θαλιησι, μακιν εκτοσθει απαρται
Θητειον δ' αις υπιω διδυμηνοις εσθλη δι παρται
Τοισιν επηρεας φερει διδυμος αραια
Αυτοματη, πολλοντε, και αφθεον, &c.

Hes. Epy. Kai. Ημερ.

En

En manifestam statūs Paradisiaci notam : **Concio**
IX.
 quum homines nondum animalium car-
 ne, sed solis terræ fructibus vescerentur !
 Sententiæ istæ variæ, ex scriptoribus an-
 tiquis excerptæ, suaviloquis hisce verbis
 Lucretianis jam tandem claudentur.

Jamque adeo affecta est ætas, affectaque tellus,
 Vix animalia parva creat, quæ cuncta creavit
 Sæcla, deditque ferarum ingentia corpora partu.

Præterea nitidas fruges, vinetaque læta
 Sponte suâ primum mortalibus ipsa creavit.
 Ipsa dedit dulces foetus, et pabula læta :
 Quæ nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta labore.

Statum hominum primigenium eo, quo
 nunc degitur, perfectiorem ecce ipsum
 Epicuri discipulum plane agnoscentem
 habemus. Neque statum naturæ talem
 poeta iste agnovisset, nisi ut rem fide dig-
 nissimam : rem universâ traditione ac-
 ceptam, gravissimorum hominum aucto-
 ritate fancitam. Narrationes igitur istas,
 quibus ipse Lucretius suffragatur, pro

Concio anili fabellâ ecquis ducet? Scriptorem
IX. **illum, qui animum fabulis vanis artifis-**
que religionis compagibus occupatum
exsolvere jactat, illum inquam creduli-
tatis arguere, ecquis in animum inducat?

De statu Paradisiaco quæ tot tanti-
que scriptores protulerunt, alii penè
innumeri, si res postularet, et locus
ferret, eadem suffragantes allegari possent.
Quid, ista omnia de conditione homi-
num primigeniâ pro figmentis poeticis
habenda putabimus? Nonne philoso-
phos, nonne historicos, viros eruditos
gravissimosque in eadem consentientes
habemus: singulos, si non vera, certe
verisimilia profarentes? Atque istas fin-
gulas de regno Saturni, ætate aureâ, et
similibus descriptiones, obumbratas qui-
dem et variis erroribus implicitas, his-
toriæ Mosaicæ vestigiis insistere et in-
sequi nullus dubito. Ab extremo fonte,
nempe a primævis hominibus derivatas,
verissimas ætatis primæ narrationes ac-
cepit

cepit Noa : easdemque, a Noæ filiis traditas, posteros accepisse, constat. *

Concio
IX.

III. Tertiò probandum restat, ut historiæ istæ de Statu Paradisiaco, a primis hominibus acceptæ, scriptoribus tum sacris, tum profanis confirmatæ, minimè futiles esse et ineptæ demonstrentur : immo e contra, rationi consentanea, naturâ humana digna, Deo optimo maximo dignissima esse hypothesis ista contenditur. Omne ens, ut loquuntur scholastici, est perfectum : quo dogmate perfectio relativa, non absoluta, significatur. Quodcunque a sapientissimo Deo creatum est, id omnibus numeris absolutum creari necesse est : dum singulæ cujusque animalis facultates atque organa, in opibus suis subveniendis, suis optatis potiundis aptæ et idoneæ, fœlicitati propriæ inser-

* Primam hominis vitam cum simplicitate fuisse, et nudo corpore, docebant et Ægyptii ; unde aurea poetarum ætas, etiam Indis celebrata, ut apud Strabonem est. Grotius de ver. Rel. Chr. lib. 1. Sect. 16.

Concio viant, ad fœlicitatem propriam affequen-
 IX. dam omnino sufficiant. Hoc experien-
 tia docet omnium, qui in studiis historiæ
 physicæ versantur: hoc, quaquaversum
 oculos circumferamus, adeo constat; ut
 si Davidi liceat jure exclamare, 'O Do-
 mine, in sapientiâ omnia fecisti: haud in-
 juriâ exclamationem alteram subjecit,
 terra, O Domine, plena est benivolentia tua.'

O infœlicem humanæ naturæ sortem,
 O homines infortunatos: qui, hujuscem
 orbis dominatores constituti, in hoc orbe
 miseri soli deprehenduntur; qui tot ani-
 malium principes, uniuscujusque sua qua-
 tenus postulat natura perfecti, imperfecti
 soli effinguntur! Cuinam enim bono
 dux ista et jucundissima comes vitæ, ut
 vanè garriunt philosophi, ratio inservit?
 Quapropter divinæ ista auræ particula
 nobis concessa est? Anne, ut perfec-
 tionis istius, istius virtutis apicem homi-
 nibus ostendat, quem natura humana
 nequit attingere; anne ob ea ut excruciet
 homines, quæ hominum natura effugere
 nequit,

nequit, commissa; anne ut miseros homines reddat? *Talia, O Domine, procul tibi absint consilia!* Actionum ergo humanarum moderatrix ista conceditur, ut actiones morales dirigat, ut appetitus prohibeat, ut vitam suavem atque jucundam reddat. Ei itaque asequendo fini aut sufficit ratio, aut non. Si non, impar est fini instituto; ac homines, quibus hujuscē finis gratiā ratio conceditur, eattenuis sunt imperfecti: Omne vero ens e manibus creatoris perfectum evasit. Fini igitur proposito sufficit ratio: nunc autem temporis fini isti rationem haud quaquam sufficere experientia quotidiana testatur; ergo olim se rem ita habuisse necesse est. Atque ex his ratiociniis sequitur, talem fuisse primævum naturæ humanæ statum, qualem a primis scriptoribus expressum accepimus.

Quantum miseriarum vitam hominum obsidet, neminem latet: ac prævidentia ipsa miseriarum quæ eludi nequeunt, quas

Concio quas neque prudētia effugere, neque
 IX. ipsa virtus repellere valet, ærumnas istas
 graviores reddit. Ferarum vita in malis
 versatur; illas vero nec præteriti recor-
 datio, neque timor futuri excruciatas
 tenet; natura illis largita est jucunda obli-
 via vitæ. Ast morbi, dolores, mors, et
 pallida mālorum cohors, non modo ho-
 minum vestigia comites certissimi infe-
 quuntur, oculis autem continuo obver-
 sañt, et mentibus quasi inhærent. Et
 si partem alteram vitæ humanæ, luci-
 dam nempe et splendidiorem, contem-
 plémur, certa homines ne minima quidem
 voluptas manet. Hoccine vero creatoris
 benevolentis, hoccine est Dei optimi
 maximi; ut animantes crearet, quas
 magna et plurima necessarió premunt
 mala; quarum vitas voluptates parvulæ
 tantum, breves, et fortuitæ mulcent?

Quid, nonne hominis vita, affectibus
 cum ratione bellum civile gerentibus,
 certamine perpetuo versatur? Meliora
 laudare atque probare, deteriora sequi,
 humanum

humanum est. Spes, Timor, Ira, Grex **Concio**
IX.
 totus affectuum *ασυνταξιαν* ciens, vicissim
 dominatur; dum ratio, gubernatrix veluti
 timida et pusilla, servis istis rebellibus
 politiam hominis internam administran-
 dam tradit. Facultatum hanc humana-
 rum dominam et reginam, quid verum
 est atque decens monentem, homines
 male aduersantur: iis, prava jubentibus,
 aures faciles præbent; quodcumque mali
 consulunt, obtemperare heu nimis parati!
 Hebescentibus denique et quasi defatiga-
 tis appetitibus torva aspici redit ratio;
 delictique nos tunc ferè pudet, piget,
 pœnitetque. Quid multis? Peccare, et
 pœnitere, atque iterum peccare, vitam
 humanam miserâ vicissitudine distinguit.

Humani generis Picturæ tali tabellam
 alteram et longè diversam jam tandem
 conferre liceat: hominis imaginem, in-
 nocentia et fœlicitatis compotem. Cor-
 poris atque animi vires puta aptè amicè-
 que conspirantes: mentem scientiâ om-
 nigenâ instructam; arbitrium voluntati

Dei

Concio Dei inserviens; appetitus congrua et contentanea quærentes, affectus denique summissos et rationi obtemperantes: facultatibus humanis ita ordinatis, (et facultates recte ordinari quid vetat?) harmonia Platonica inde sequitur: hinc Moses Status Paradisiacus; hinc ætas aurea poetarum.

Perfectionis istius apicem, in qua homines primitus creari demonstrat ratio, ipsorumque conditionem, quam experientia hodierna probat, qui perpenderunt philosophi, tantæ metamorphoseos causas hinc et inde quæsiverunt. Quin talis effecta fuit Morum atque Indolis Mutationis, nemo fere dubitavit; causa usque latebat. Nodum istum resolvere, nodum hercè Deo vindice dignum, veritatis fons et principium Deus ipse dignatus est: *Nubesque inter et tenebras, quæ obvolvunt eum, æquitatem et justitiam solo ejus insidere, demonstravit.* Et ecquis adeo iniquus est rerum æstimator, qui œconomiae divinæ explicationem talem nullius ponderat

aut

aut usus leviusculi pendit? At nihilne ^{Concre}
 interest, ut de Deo et nobis ipsis recte
 tentiamus? Nihilne ^{IX.} interest, ut nobis
 innotescat, quam ob culpam in hunc
 mundum, veluti in carcere, Deus ho-
 mines relegavit; miseriis innumeris ob-
 fitos, fœlicitatis veræ vix umbris releva-
 tos? Hæc denique nescientibus, fœli-
 citatem eorum futuram ecquæ argumen-
 ta compertam facient? Si hic miser
 sim, et id unde fiat, nescio; quomodo
 sciam me non posthac quoque miserum
 futurum? Dubitationes istas curasque
 sollicitas, quibus tenetur quisque cui sua
 fœlicitas cordi est, Deus jam benignè
 dissipavit; et formidinis loco spes novas
 suppeditavit. Verbum igitur Dei, in
 scripturis factis quafi jubare conscrip-
 tum, in queis reteguntur arcana, mundi
 ab origine primâ caliginosi erroris nebulis
 oboluta, in queis solummodo salus, in
 queis nuda simplexque veritas deprehen-
 ditur, animo facili gratoque amplecti,
 nostrum est. Hoc duce usq; vires novas
 ratio

CONCIO ratio depromet; quæ, si male fastidiosa
IX. ducem sequi dedignetur, in errorum
turbine tumultuante illico immergitur:
quo fit, ut nihil ferè adeo absurdum in-
veniatur, quod non aliquis θεολογευτῶν nos-
tratum asseveravit.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

	<i>Page</i>
For <i>Practise</i> read <i>Practice</i>	7
— <i>Weaknesses</i> read <i>Weakness</i>	92
— <i>Man</i> read <i>II. Man</i>	96
— <i>Diffidence</i> read <i>Diffidence</i>	139
— <i>Sermon XI. dele</i>	160
— <i>em</i> read <i>me</i>	166
— <i>Reverence</i> read <i>Reference</i>	172
— <i>lay</i> read <i>lie</i>	174
— <i>and considered, dele</i>	and 175
— <i>nor do</i> read <i>neither do</i>	191
— <i>Their Priests</i> dele	193
— <i>Lic. de Divinitatione</i> read <i>Cic. de Divinatione</i>	200
— <i>termed</i> read <i>stiled</i>	216
— <i>πρωτοτοκος</i> read <i>πρωτοτοκος</i>	232
— <i>Resurrection</i> read <i>Resurrection</i>	235
— <i>them</i> read <i>them away</i>	271

By the Author may be had,

Vol.

1. Letters on the Nature and Origin of Evil. Price 3s.
2. Reflections on the Doctrine of Materialism. Price 3s.
3. A free Examination of the Socinian Exposition of the Prefatory Verses of St. John's Gospel. Price 2s,











JAN 29 1941

